INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to outline the fostering allowances, fees and payments paid to all foster carers who care for children on behalf of Southwark Council. This includes foster carers both related and unrelated to the child as well as both short and long term placements.

The payment scheme is effective from 1 April 2014 and will be reviewed annually.

DEFINITIONS

A foster carer means a person who is approved as a foster parent in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (FSR), or is temporarily approved as a foster carer under the Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (CPPCR).

The Council defines three types of foster carers by recognising: the different routes to becoming such a carer; the varying Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards; and the specific nature of their approval as a foster carer.

A **general foster carer** is suitable to foster within their terms of approval any child the Council may wish to place with them and is approved under Regulation 27 of the FSR.

A **friends & family foster carer** is a relative, friend or other person connected with a child in care who is also approved as a foster carer either temporarily under Regulation 24 of the CPPCR, or fully under Regulation 27 of the FSR as above.

A **fostering for adoption carer** is a person who is approved as an adopter but is suitable to foster a named child while the court decides if adoption is the right plan for the child. They are temporarily approved as a foster carer under Regulation 25A of the CPPCR.
THE PAYMENT SCHEME

The foster care allowances scheme comprises the following elements:

(i) Basic Fostering Allowance
(ii) Fostering Fee – Level 1
(iii) Fostering Fee – Level 2
(iv) Fostering Fee – Level 3
(v) Specific additional allowances

1. Basic Fostering Allowance

1.1 All foster carers are entitled to this allowance, which is designed to meet the basic costs of caring for a child.

1.2 The allowance is a weekly amount based on the child’s age, and is set at the current rate for Inner London recommended by the National Fostering Network (NFN).

1.3 The following is the recommended indicative breakdown of how the allowance should be spent. This may need to be adjusted depending on the specific needs of each individual child.

- Food including school meals.................................25%
- Leisure and activities.............................................20%
- Clothing........................................................................15%
- Household costs (towards bills and repairs).............15%
- Health and hygiene...................................................5%
- Transport.....................................................................5%
- Pocket money.................................................................5%
- Savings for the child.....................................................5%
- Babysitting/childminding..............................................5%

Details of the core services which carers are expected to provide on Southwark’s behalf are contained in the Foster Carer’s Handbook.

2. Fostering Fee – Level 1

2.1 All foster carers are entitled to the Basic Fostering Allowance plus the Fostering Fee – Level 1, provided they have completed the Skills to Foster Training / Family and Friends Skills to Foster Training and they undertake to complete the Southwark Post-Approval Fostering Training within 3 months of being approved or a timescale agreed by the Fostering Service.

2.2 All foster carers are required to make a commitment to completing the Department for Education’s Training Support and Development (TSD) Standards for Foster Carers within 12 to 18 months, and to complete all relevant training as identified by their supervising social worker to enhance their ability to care for the children placed with them.

2.3 All foster carers are required to consider all placements of children within their approval category when requested. If unable to accept such placements foster carers must provide clear reasons why.
2.4 All fostering for adoption carers are also entitled to the Fostering Fee – Level 1 if they complete the learning module Fostering for Adoption as part of their learning and development to becoming approved adopters, and engage in continuing learning about the specific needs of the child in their care as directed by their supervising social worker. This may include specific courses, e-learning or other learning and development activity.

2.5 The 2014/15 Fostering Fee – Level 1 is a flat rate of **£150 per week**.

3. Fostering Fee – Level 2

3.1 All foster carers are entitled to the Fostering Fee – Level 2 provided they meet the requirements to qualify for the Basic Fostering Allowance plus the Fostering Fee – Level 1. In addition they must have completed the training and met the TSD Standards for Foster Carers 2012.

3.2 All general foster carers are required to provide evidence that they have completed the training and met the TSD Standards for Foster Carers 2012 within 12 months of being approved.

3.3 All friends & family foster carers are required to provide evidence that they have completed the training and met the TSD Standards for Family and Friends Carers, which is a simplified version of the TSD Standards for Foster Carers 2012, within 18 months of being approved.

3.4 To continue to qualify for the Fostering Fee – Level 2 all foster carers are expected in subsequent years to undertake a minimum of two pieces of further relevant training each year, and demonstrate at their annual reviews how they have used these, and other forms of learning, in their practice as foster carers, to enhance their ability to care for the children placed with them over the course of the year.

3.5 Foster carers may be asked to contribute to the service by being part of development groups, e.g. training strategy or recruitment strategy. They may also be asked to mentor or buddy new or inexperienced foster carers or contribute to the Skills to Foster course.

3.6 The 2014/15 Fostering Fee – Level 2 is a flat rate of **£165 per week**.
4. **Fostering Fee – Level 3**

4.1 Foster carers who qualify for Fostering Fee – Level 3 are specialist carers who can demonstrate through their training and practice that they are able to meet the special needs of the child for the type of specialist foster placement required.

4.2 At present the only type of specialist foster placement recognised for this level is that for disabled children and young people. Additional types of specialist foster placement may be included following a policy review.

4.3 Foster carers for disabled children and young people must be able to offer an environment which is adapted and equipped to maximise the child’s independence or be willing to have such adaptations made to their home, particularly if the placement is long term. They must be willing to follow specialist advice regarding the use of suitable equipment e.g. hoists for transfers.

4.4 The 2014/15 Fostering Fee – Level 3 is a flat rate of £165 per week, but this is paid in addition to twice the Basic Fostering Allowance.

5. **Specific additional allowances**

5.1 Unless specifically stated below, all types of foster carers are in principle entitled to the following additional allowances for each child, which are paid in addition to the Basic Fostering Allowance and any Fostering Fee applicable.

5.2 Some additional allowances are discretionary, as indicated below. Some are paid annually, and others are a one-off payment. Where payments are discretionary, the decision will be made by the Head of Service, Permanence.

5.3 Allowances are paid to the foster carers, who should record how the allowance is spent and keep receipts for production on request.

5.4 The local authority will normally purchase equipment in negotiation with the carer and arrange delivery. Where the carer has purchased items with the prior agreement of the local authority, the authority has discretion not to pay for the items until receipts have been produced.

5.5 Southwark’s additional allowances are currently for 2014/15:-

   a) **Birthday and Festivities allowance**

      Age of child 0-10 years - £200 per year
      Age of child 11-18 years - £300 per year

   b) **Annual Holiday allowance**

      Age of child 0-10 years - £250
      Age of child 11-18 years - £400

      In addition, no more than once every 3 years foster carers may request a further payment for special holidays.

   c) **Setting-up costs for carers**
This is generally paid only once for items such as bedroom furnishings, up to a maximum of £750.

d) Setting-up costs for the child

This is generally paid only once for items such as the child’s clothes and equipment, up to a maximum of £200.

e) School uniform allowance

This is usually only paid where a child changes school on a change of placement, up to a maximum of £100 for primary school and £200 for secondary school.

f) Technology allowance

This allowance of up to £600 maximum is for a computer, printer and a digital camera for use by the child/children.

An annual sum of up to £150 is payable to cover broadband connection and printing costs.

Equipment can be upgraded at a frequency of not less than every 5 three years to a value of £400.

6. Foster carers who wish to adopt

6.1 Where a foster carer adopts a child placed with them by Southwark, and that adoption is supported by Southwark, the carer will receive for the first 2 years following the adoption order, the same amount they had received as a foster carer when the adoption order is made.

6.2 There is discretion to extend the payments beyond 2 years in exceptional circumstances if the child’s needs warrant it. This decision will be made by the Head of Service, Permanence.

6.3 After the 2 years have expired, the adoptive carer will then receive whatever they are assessed as being entitled to by way of adoption financial support.

6.4 The 2 year transitional period is to enable the carers to adjust to the change in status and is promoted as part of Southwark’s Foster to Adopt Scheme.

7. Miscellaneous matters

7.1 Before any allowances or fees are paid under this policy, foster carers must give their written agreement to Southwark’s Terms and Conditions which are designed to meet the National Minimum Standards for Fostering. Details of the core services which carers are expected to provide on Southwark’s behalf are contained in the Foster Carer’s Handbook.

7.2 Payments are generally only made for the period when a child is placed with a foster carer. In exceptional circumstances payments may be made to a carer although a child is not placed with them, with the agreement of the Head of Service.
7.3 There are transitional arrangements for those existing foster carers who would receive less under this policy from April 2014 than they received pre-April 2014. Those carers will continue to receive payments at the pre-April 2014 rate, for the children they are currently fostering, until such time as the payments under this policy reach the same level as those they are receiving, when they will transfer to this policy.

7.4 Foster carers are responsible for all or any tax due by them to HM Revenue & Customs, and should ensure they contact their local tax office to clarify what, if anything, they owe.

7.5 Details of all training schemes referred to in this policy can be obtained from Southwark’s Fostering Service.

7.6 In exceptional circumstances foster carers may be supported to make changes to their property or other significant purchase that enables them to meet the needs of a child. Details about this are available in Southwark’s Capital Payments to Carers Policy.
### ANNEX 1

**Southwark Fostering Allowances and Fees 2014/15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age band (child’s years)</th>
<th>Basic Fostering Allowance (NFN rate)</th>
<th>Fostering Fee Level 1 NFN rate + £150</th>
<th>Fostering Fee Level 2 NFN rate + £165</th>
<th>Fostering Fee Level 3 2 x NFN rate + £165</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 4</td>
<td>164.71</td>
<td>314.71</td>
<td>329.71</td>
<td>494.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 – 10</td>
<td>187.77</td>
<td>337.77</td>
<td>352.77</td>
<td>540.54</td>
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<td>11 – 15</td>
<td>233.83</td>
<td>383.83</td>
<td>398.83</td>
<td>632.66</td>
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<td>16+</td>
<td>283.95</td>
<td>433.95</td>
<td>448.95</td>
<td>732.90</td>
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