Children and Families Service

Title	Hackney Foster Carers and Connected Carers Fees and Allowances Policy, 2026/27
Policy Area	Corporate Parenting
Sign-off	Laura Bleaney, Head of Corporate Parenting Frida Lannemyr, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
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Our policies, procedures and guidance adhere to our core Hackney Children and Education principles to:

- Apply 'STAR' our aspirational Systemic, Trauma-informed, Anti-Racist approach to practice to achieve Social Justice
- Promote equity, equality and diversity in all our activities, ensuring inclusive processes, practices, and culture with consideration to all protected characteristics, in line with the Council's Equality Plan.
- Disrupt and dismantle systemic racism, inequality and injustice
- Ensuring that every child and young person in Hackney has a safe, healthy and inclusive environment in which they can thrive. This includes all those who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+)
- Utilise a strengths-based Domestic Abuse informed approach to practice

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Hackney Foster Carers and Connected Carers Fees and Allowances 2026/27

Effective 1 April 2026

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1. Types of Fostering

There are different types of foster care a foster carer could be asked to provide:

- **Emergency** foster carers provide care at very short notice, often the same day, for up to one week.

- **Short-term** foster carers look after children taken into care at short notice until their family situation has been resolved, usually for up to a year or more.

- **Long-term** foster carers look after children who require care for an extended period of time, usually up until aged 18.

- **Connected carers (family and friends)** are relatives, friends or other persons who look after a child/ren with whom they have a pre-existing relationship. If the arrangement is likely to continue past 16 weeks the connected carer will be assessed and approved by Hackney's Fostering Service as a Hackney foster carer. (See Kinship Care Local Offer)

Note: Throughout this policy the term 'foster carer' also includes connected carers/family and friends carers, unless specified.

2. Weekly Allowances for Foster Carers

All foster carers receive an allowance, including temporarily approved carers, approved carers and connected carers (also known as Regulation 24 placements).

The allowance is provided to cover the costs of caring for a looked after child. For example, it covers the costs of accommodating the child in the home, food and associated household bills, entertainment and activity costs, clothing costs and items that help children and young people improve their outcomes.

Foster carers will be paid the same allowance for children placed through the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium (NLAFC) as they would for a Hackney looked after child unless the placement is made under a specialist scheme. This is the agreement between all Local Authorities that are part of the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium.

3. Additional Skills Payments

Foster carers that complete the professional development training, receive an additional skills payment to recognise and properly regard the skills, experience and training of foster carers. Foster carers with the experience alongside the necessary training can also receive the specialist skills rates outlined under the payments of allowances and fees section.

Carers will receive an additional skills payment if they meet the training and development requirements outlined for all foster carers as part of Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards. This includes attending all the training listed in their annual Personal Development Plan, such as Skills to Foster training.

This fee is paid in recognition that this commitment to ongoing training and development enhances a foster carer's skills and abilities to care for children. If foster carers do not attend all the training and/or support groups included in their Personal Development Plan during the year, this allowance will be reviewed at their annual review.

There are three skills fee levels in addition to the allowance. Approval at the different levels will depend on:

- The carer's assessed core skills;
- The length of experience as an approved carer; and
- The training that has been undertaken.

The level of fee does **not** depend on the complexity of managing the child's behaviour, but is instead linked to the foster carer's competency and training. Evidence of prior experience and training will be taken into account in setting the initial level of each foster carer.

Relatives or friends of a specific child, who become connected carers for that child, will be approved as Level 1 carers, once they have completed the Skills to Foster training.

Level 1 carers
Normally awarded following approval under Regulation 27. To progress to a Level 1 foster carer(s) must have completed the pre-approval training (Skills to Foster).

Level 2 carers
Normally awarded during the second and third years following approval under Regulation 27. To progress to a Level 2, foster carer(s) must have completed the mandatory Level 1 training. Approved foster carers will also complete the TSDS portfolio (Training support and Development standards) which the fostering service supports foster carers in completing within their first year of fostering. and within 18 months for friends and family carers.

Level 3 carers
Normally awarded during the fourth and fifth years following approval under Regulation 27. To progress to a Level 3 foster carer(s) must have completed Level 1, Level 2 and additional Level 3 training or meet the requirements as specified in the Level 3 description.

4. Training and Skills Level Changes

Annual reviews will follow the 'Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure' (Please refer to Section 2 of the 'Foster Carer Handbook: Fostering Panels and Foster Carer Reviews). Carers are expected to provide evidence of the training they have attended during the previous 12 months. Foster carers can progress to further skill levels only once they have successfully completed their training and reviews. Carers who do not complete the training needed for level progression, or whose review does not recommend progression, will remain on their current level, however they will need to maintain the level by completing the relevant training throughout the year. A minimum of 5 training sessions is required per year.

Each Foster Carer will have a Personal Development Plan that outlines training to meet their individual needs and to support them in responding to the everyday needs of the children and young people in their care.

It is important that foster carers understand that there is a distinction between training that is needed to progress to the next level, and training that is required to maintain their current level.

Foster carers are able to progress from one level to another if the requirements and competencies for the **next** level are met. Should a foster carer not continue to meet the requirements of the level on which they are placed, they will not be eligible for skills payments for that level and may be moved down a level. This will be discussed and agreed at their annual foster carer review.

No carer will drop to 'allowance only' level, but there is an expectation that all mandatory training will be completed in the first year.

All foster carers will be expected to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) workbook for Foster Carers in the first 12 months after approval under Regulation 27 (in the first 18 months for family and friends carers).

For foster carers to progress to each skills fee level, they must meet the training and skills requirements for the three levels which will be set out in their Personal Development plan.

All foster carers who complete the Skills to Foster Training and who satisfactorily complete further training as set out in their Personal Development plan may progress to the next level. The level will be recommended at each annual foster carer review and a letter will be sent to the foster carer with an effective start date.

The decision to move to a different skills level is made by the Team Managers for Levels 1 and 2 and by the Service Manager for Level 3 following recommendations from the annual review unless there is a strong case for someone to be moved between reviews. The summary report will be completed by the fostering social worker and will need to be signed off by the relevant manager as detailed above.

The skills level will be based on:

- Competency and proof of these competencies
- Meeting the Foster Carer Skills and Experience Descriptions requirements for the three skills fee levels.

The Fostering Team Managers will inform the commissioning and resource hub and the finance hub of any changes in approval category that will impact on payments.

It is Fostering Services responsibility to ensure there is a wide breadth of training available for foster carers tailored to their needs and development. The training programme should be discussed regularly with the Hackney Foster Carer Council to ensure the needs of foster carers are being met and that they are actively supported to develop and progress through the different levels and to ensure that each individual carer has a Personal Development Plan.

It is the responsibility of foster carers to email the fostering training inbox and copy in their social worker to enrol on training courses that have been identified at the annual review

or during Supervision as being appropriate and agreed as part of the Personal Development Plan. Foster carers are encouraged to enrol on additional courses that they are interested in.

It is the responsibility of foster carers to keep evidence of training completed. Suggested training is listed in the skills and experience description for each level but should not be considered exhaustive. Discussions about additional training between foster carers and their fostering social worker are encouraged. Recommendations for training and development for the next 12 months are agreed by the foster carer and fostering social worker at the annual review meeting and endorsed by the Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer.

Where both members of a couple are approved as foster carers and both are required to attend the Skills to Foster Training, it is preferable that both members of the couple undertake training. This may not be possible for all training events, so the fee level will be decided on the skills and knowledge of the primary carer. However it is expected that the non primary carer attends some training throughout the year. Carer annual reviews may identify areas of training which one or both carers should attend.

Further details about the qualifications required to progress through each skills level are in the relevant skills and experience descriptions.

Remember: The allowance will remain in line with the Government recommended rates of allowances for the relevant financial year. Skills level rates will be set annually by Hackney Council.

5. Appeals Against Skills Levels Awarded

Any appeal against the setting of the skills level can be made, in writing, to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) within 14 days of written notification of the skills level.

6. Payments of Allowances and Fees

Both payment elements are paid per night on a fortnightly basis in arrears via the foster carer's nominated bank account. Carers will receive their allowance on a Friday with the period of pay running from Thursday to Wednesday.

A remittance advice is sent out to the foster carers on a fortnightly basis stating the child's unique ID number.

The Council will publish any rate changes as soon as possible, and will always notify foster carers at least 6 weeks in advance before applying, including when a reduction is due to moving to a lower skills level.

Remember: As a foster carer you are classed as self-employed and you will need to make sure that you register as such with the HMRC and you will also have to pay your own National Insurance and complete a tax return at the end of the year to work out how much tax you will need to pay on your fostering fees. You can contact HMRC for further advice.

The Fostering Network can give guidance and support on completion of your tax returns – Tel: 020 7620 6400 or email: info@fostering.net, Hackney Foster Carer Council also have representatives who can advise and support on this matter, please ask your social worker.

Allowances and fees for 2026/27 – minimum weekly allowance

Inside London

Skills Tier	**Age of child**				
	0 – 2	**3 – 4**	**5 – 10**	**11 – 15**	**16 - 17**
Allowance	205	208	233	266	309
Level 1 Skills element	185.89	185.89	185.89	185.89	185.89
Level 1 total paid £	**390.89**	**393.89**	**418.89**	**451.89**	**494.89**
Level 2 Skills element	222.70	222.70	222.70	222.70	222.70
Level 2 total paid £	**427.70**	**430.70**	**455.70**	**488.70**	**531.70**
Level 3 Skills element	265.12	265.12	265.12	265.12	265.12
Level 3 total paid £	**470.12**	**473.12**	**498.12**	**531.12**	**574.12**

South East (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, East Sussex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex) and **Rest of the UK**.

Skills Tier (Allowance only)	**Age of child**				
	0 – 2	**3 – 4**	**5 – 10**	**11 – 15**	**16 - 17**
South East	195	203	223	255	298
Rest of UK	176	182	201	227	267

SPECIALIST FOSTER CARERS WEEKLY FEES AND ALLOWANCES

Skills Tier	Age of child				
	0 – 2	**3 – 4**	**5 – 10**	**11 – 15**	**16 - 17**
Allowance	205	208	233	266	309
Specialist rate (under 13)	NA	400	400	400	NA
Total paid £	**NA**	**608**	**633**	**666**	**N/A**
Specialist teenage rate	NA	NA	NA	549	549
Total paid £	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**815**	**858**

RESIDENTIAL STEP DOWN FOSTER CARERS WEEKLY FEES AND ALLOWANCES

Skills Tier	Age of child				
	0 – 2	**3 – 4**	**5 – 10**	**11 – 15**	**16 - 17**
Allowance	205	208	233	266	309
skills element	N/A	N/A	1200	1200	1200
Total paid £			**1433**	**1466**	**1509**

Remember: The residential Step down fee will be paid for up to 1 year and then stepped down to the specialist Fostering rate as above

PARENT AND CHILD WEEKLY FEES AND ALLOWANCES

Skills element of £549 in line with our specialist teenage rate in addition to the child's/children's allowances.

Hackney foster carers will be consulted via Hackney Foster Care Council prior to any major changes to the payment scheme.

7. Planned Sleep-overs

Foster carers on skills level 1 and above will be able to request planned sleep-overs for the child/ children that they look after. Hackney Fostering Service can organise up to 14 nights of sleep-over for the children per annum (April 1st to March 31st). However, this can also be discussed on a case by case basis if the child's social work Team recommends there is a need of more than 14 nights per annum.

If you wish to arrange planned sleep-overs, you will need to discuss with your fostering social worker and consult with the child's social work team to make arrangements.

During the time the child is staying with the temporary foster carer, the temporary foster carer will receive the child's age allowance and skills payment (Level 1, 2 or 3). The amount will depend on the area the foster carer resides in, as outlined in the tables above.

The main foster carer will receive the existing skills payment (Level 1, 2 or 3), but not the allowance, as this is intended for the care of the child.

From time to time it may be appropriate for a child to be looked after temporarily by a member of the carers' extended family or friend, (back-up carer). In this case, the usual checks will be carried out and a short assessment will need the approval of the children's social work team and the Fostering Service. This is a more beneficial arrangement when the foster child already knows the relative or friend. This may be a good way to provide continuity of care for the child.

In this case payment is arranged between the foster carer and the support carer. It is suggested that the amount paid is equal to the proportion of the child's allowance for the days they are away. If it is agreed by the fostering team manager that a support carer offers ongoing support to the foster carer they should attend relevant training including the skills to foster training. The support carer should then be paid directly and also receive a skills level 1 payment for the period they offer support to the foster carer.

8. Guidance on Items Covered in the Allowance

<table>
<tr><td>Clothing</td><td>The clothing element of the allowance can be used flexibly by the foster carer to buy clothes directly for younger children; or if appropriate be given to older children/young people on a weekly/monthly basis to purchase their own clothing. Older young people should be encouraged to take responsibility for some of this allowance as part of their developing independence skills and learning to budget.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Recommended weekly spend</th></tr>
<tr><th>Age Range</th><th>Amount</th></tr>
<tr><td>0-4</td><td>£10.18</td></tr>
<tr><td>5-10</td><td>£11.85</td></tr>
<tr><td>11-15</td><td>£15.46</td></tr>
<tr><td>16-17</td><td>£20.13</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pocket Money</td><td>Pocket money should be provided to all children looked after in your care</td></tr>
</table>

	Please see below the recommended weekly minimum amount in accordance with age ranges - Up to 11 - £7 11 - 13 - £10 14 - 16 - £15 17 - 18 - £20 This should be discussed and agreed with the child and their social worker at the settling in meeting.
School photographs	The allowance provides for the purchase of a yearly set of standard school photographs (approximately £15). If it is assessed by the foster carer's social worker that supplementary photographs are required a 'one off' payment will be made by the Fostering Service.
Standard school materials	School materials that are required for a child's school attendance and activities are included in the allowance. If specific major items are required, foster carers should contact their social worker regarding payments for 'one off' educational items.
School trips	Carers are expected to pay for any school trips up to £100 per school year from the allowance. Costs over and above this may be claimed as additional expenditure but must be agreed in advance by the child's social work unit.
Activities	Carers are expected to pay for up to two activities a week. If the activities are expensive, foster carers should contact their social worker to ask if a contribution can be made towards the activity.
Mobile phones	If a child/young person has a mobile phone it is expected that the foster carer will provide £15 per month to top up their allowance on a pay as you go phone, or £15 towards a monthly contract. Foster carers are strongly advised not to take out phone contracts for young people in their own name as this could result in carers being out of pocket if the young person moves to a new care arrangement before the contract ends.
Toiletries	In general it is expected that children would use toiletries provided by carers for general use. As children get older, carers should provide them with toiletries of their choice, within reason. In order to encourage young people to budget as they get older, an allowance should be given to them to purchase their own toiletries.
Glasses and contact lenses	The allowance covers the first £50 per annum of purchasing or replacing glasses/contact lenses in each financial year. Expenditure in excess of this may be reclaimed.

Nursery fees	Nursery provision is available free up to 15 hours per week for 2 year olds who Children Looked After. This option is to be maximised for all 2 year olds in a care arrangement. Nursery fees are included in the allowance.
Luggage	The allowance provides for the purchase of two items of luggage for children and young people. All young people moving to independence or between homes must have appropriate personal luggage. It is **not** acceptable for any item of the young person's belongings to be moved in bin liners.
Travel costs	Foster carers are expected to provide public transport fares for children in their care to and from school, activities and contact from the allowance. Wherever possible, it is expected that carers should transport children in their care to education, family time (where it's safe to do so), health appointments and leisure activities. Where appropriate, and depending on an assessment of need that takes account of age and maturity, young people should be encouraged to use local public transport and should be provided with reasonable funds to enable them to do this.

Items not covered in the allowance

Hair Care Support for Black Children in our Care	We recognise that the costs of caring for Black African and Caribbean hair types can be significant. Young people from our Children in Care Council have helped us understand how important this can be to the sense of self and well-being for children and young people in our care: watch their short video here. In recognition of this, our Foster Carers are able to claim a specific allowance to support the care of Black African and Caribbean hair types, this includes funding the cost of styling hair, for example, braiding, dreadlocking, relaxing and any other hair styling in this category. An additional payment of £15 per week has been agreed to support this expenditure. This is not payment towards hair products as this should be covered by the fostering allowance. This payment is for the actual grooming of the hair. This payment should be requested at the onset of the care arrangement or at any time in the care arrangement when the need is identified, by the child's or foster carer's social worker and approved by the Consultant Social Worker (CSW) or Practice Development Manager (PDM) in Fostering. For 16 and 17 year olds living in supported accommodation, we have a similar offer. An additional payment of up to £60 per month can be given to support Black African or Caribbean hair care. A discussion about whether this is required should be part of the Pathway Planning process between the young person and their social worker and, if agreed, approved by a Team manager or

	Service Manager. If necessary, the social work team should arrange for this spend to be supervised, for example, for a support worker to accompany the child to the hairdresser.
Clothing for proms	An additional allowance may be claimed up to a maximum of £100 for any young person in Year 11 or above to attend a prom. This may be claimed as an 'exceptional' expenditure, but must be agreed in advance by the Team Manager and receipts must be provided.
School uniform	This allowance can be claimed when a child/young person either starts a new school or changes school. The cost of the uniform can be claimed up to a maximum amount, set out below: On starting or changing primary school - £100.00 On starting or changing secondary school - £200.00 This must be agreed in advance by the Fostering Support Team Manager.
Family Time	When a child has family time with their parents it is not expected that carers should fund any activities that they do. Carers are, however, expected to provide a snack and drink for the child only. If the family time is between siblings it is expected that carers fund their child's activity so that family time can be more informal.
Key Documents	The child's social work team will fund a passport and birth certificate for all children and young people. This will provide two forms of identification and a travel document. The passport and birth certificate can assist young people with opening bank/savings accounts when young people are moving towards independence.
Hackney Looked After Child Savings Scheme (From April 2014)	For each looked after child, Hackney Council will save £5.00 per week. The Department for Education has appointed The Share Foundation (www.sharefound.org) as coordinator for Junior Individual Savings Account (ISA) for Looked after Children. To qualify for the Junior ISA, the Looked after Child or young person must have been in care for at least one year and not have a Child Trust Fund (CTF) already (i.e., born *before* 1 September 2002 when CTF began or born *after* 1 January 2011 when CTF was abolished).

	Young people (aged 16 plus) receiving a 16-19 Bursary, Modern Apprenticeship Allowance, or wages should be encouraged to save some of this money.
Other savings	All children looked after continuously for more than 12 months will have either a Child Trust Fund (CFT) (if born between 01/09/2002 and 02/01/2011) or a Junior Individual Savings Account (ISA) if born thereafter. The accounts are administered by the Share Foundation. These are government backed accounts which are opened with an initial payment from the government of £200.00. The child cannot remove the money from these accounts until they reach 18 years of age. Arrangements for children to save additional money should be discussed at the Settling in meeting. Carers and parents may also make additional payments into the child's CTF or Junior ISA account. There is a short application form to complete and you will need to include the child or young person's unique reference number which their social worker can obtain for you.

9. Guidance on Grants, Additional and Discretionary Payments

'Setting up' furniture and equipment for newly approved foster carers	When Hackney Council newly approves a foster carer, it is acknowledged that a certain amount of equipment is required in order for them to undertake the fostering tasks. If the foster carer does not already possess what is needed, additional funding may be available. Foster carers on approval will be expected to make the necessary purchases and provide receipts up to a value of £500. Upon approved receipts the Council will reimburse the expenditure. For foster carers with a preference to take babies aged 0-2 years, Hackney Council will provide up to £620 as a one-off 'setting up allowance' as a contribution toward the purchase of the following: • Cot and mattress • Pushchair/buggy, etc. • High chair • Car seat • Steriliser unit • Baby monitor • Bedding Hackney Council will provide up to £500 as a one-off 'setting up allowance' as a contribution toward the purchase of the following for children aged 3-18: • Bed • Wardrobe • Chest of drawers

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>

Car seat (if appropriate)
Stair gate (if appropriate)
Bedding

The Fostering Service will be responsible for providing new cot mattresses for children aged 0-2 years, in line with recommendations that a new mattress should be provided for each new baby.

Foster carers should consider whether a new mattress is required for an older child and notify their social care team accordingly.

When a carer's age preference is changed, either to extend the age range or to increase the numbers, they should discuss with their social worker what (if any) extra equipment is needed. The details of each item and the cost should be presented to the Team Manager and or Service Manager for approval.
</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Remember: It is the responsibility of the foster carer to ensure all equipment purchased for their use with fostered children is kept maintained and clean. The Fostering Service will pay for new items if they need to be replaced through reasonable wear and tear, but reserves the right to refuse to pay for replacement equipment that has been poorly maintained or damaged through improper use.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Birthday, festive and holiday allowances</td><td>
The table below sets out additional allowances which may be paid for each looked after child.
<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Type of Allowance</th><th colspan="5">Age of child</th></tr>
<tr><th>0 – 2</th><th>3 – 5</th><th>6 – 10</th><th>11 – 15</th><th>16 - 17</th></tr>
<tr><th></th><th colspan="5">£</th></tr>
<tr><td>Birthday</td><td>60</td><td>70</td><td>80</td><td>90</td><td>100</td></tr>
<tr><td>Festive</td><td>60</td><td>70</td><td>80</td><td>90</td><td>100</td></tr>
<tr><td>Holiday</td><td>450</td><td>450</td><td>450</td><td>450</td><td>450</td></tr>
</table>
Looked after children will receive £100 for their 18th birthday, and given to them via their foster carer.

The birthday and festive allowances must be paid in full to the young person, either in the form of a gift they have chosen or as a cash payment. Any additional treats, such as birthday cakes, or special meals should be paid for separately by the carer and not taken from the allowance.

Please note that only one festive allowance will be paid on the behalf of any young person per annum. Should a festive allowance be requested at any other time than at Christmas e.g for Eid or Diwali, no allowance will be awarded in December.
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Additional guidance regarding</td><td>Children in foster care should be able to participate in a family holiday, and ideally this will be with their foster family. These can include short breaks, organising days out, or spending a block of time away from home.</td></tr>
</table>

holiday allowances	Money is already allocated within the weekly allowances for activities and trips and there is an expectation that carers will provide their foster children with these opportunities. The Fostering Service will make available a holiday payment of £450 per year per looked after child. The payment can be used for one holiday or several holidays planned throughout the year. The holiday plans should be recorded in the foster carer's supervision record. The holiday payment is paid in July for the full year. Arrangements to receive the payment before July can be agreed in advance with the Fostering Support Team manager and recorded in the foster carer's supervision record. Evidence of receipts for holiday bookings when allowance is requested early must be provided. Holiday payment would not generally be paid for temporary care arrangements however, this can be discussed on a case by case basis if the child's social work team recommends there is a need. School residential trips are not included in this payment. Foster carers should contact their child's social work team in advance when schools set dates and cost of residential trips, which will be funded on a discretionary basis by the child's team. It might also be possible for residential trips to be funded through the Pupil Premium, so foster carers should discuss this with the school before approaching the social work team. A festive payment will be paid in December for the full year. Arrangements to receive the payment before December can be agreed **in advance** with the Fostering Support Team manager and recorded in the foster carer's supervision record.
Exceptional expenditure	As most costs of fostering are already being met, it is only in exceptional cases that additional allowances may be paid. Instances in which exceptional expenditure might be awarded include: (a) To support specific special needs - Where the special needs of the child cannot be met by the allowance, e.g. special diet, special activities, special equipment/items, etc. Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independent Payment (PIP) if 16 or over) should be considered in the first instance. The special needs of a child might not always be evident when they first move to their care arrangement and may take time to establish. This could be because the assessment is still underway, or they have never had an assessment of their special needs. If you are in receipt of PIP or DLA for any child in your care, **foster carers must:**

	• Produce receipts as appropriate; • Keep clear records of expenditure; • Keep a log of expenditure where a receipt was not possible (a receipt must be provided for all expenditure over £50); • Make all records, logs and receipts available for scrutiny by their Fostering Social Worker. • Notify the PIP Enquiry line when a child moves on The Fostering social worker will provide the foster carer with an expenditure monitoring form Foster Carers in receipt of benefits for LAC monitoring form. This will be monitored during Supervision. (b) To purchase a one-off piece of equipment; If equipment for an activity is very expensive, e.g. sports equipment or musical instrument, consideration will be given to paying for this, assuming the young person has shown a commitment to the activity over a number of weeks. (c) To support the management of Black African and Caribbean hair types; for help with the grooming of Black African and Caribbean hair, this includes funding the cost of braiding, dreadlocks and any other hair styling in this category. An additional payment of £15 per week has been agreed to support this expenditure. This is not payment towards hair products as this should be covered by the fostering allowance. This payment is for the actual grooming of the hair. This payment should be requested at the onset of the placement or at any time in placement when the need is identified, by the fostering or LAC social worker and approved by the CSW or PDM in fostering. Social workers should itemise the expenditure fully, giving the criteria for the expenditure. All exceptional expenditure must be authorised **in advance** by the Fostering Support team manager. The 'Additional Expenditure' claim form can be requested from your social worker. This needs to be completed and passed to the Fostering Support Team.
Out of hours payments – See comment	A one off payment of £100 per child will be paid if a foster carer accepts a child from the Out of Hours Service (EDT). This payment is only made if the foster carer receives a call after 5pm Monday – Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday. If the initial call is made to the carer before 5pm, however the child does not arrive until after 5, no OOH payment will be made. The foster carer must be prepared to keep the child until plans are made for alternative care. Foster carers on the Out of Hours list will only receive a payment if they are asked to provide care for a child and have accepted. The Fostering matching ad engagement Manager must support and endorse admission of foster carers to the Out of Hours Service list.

Retainers during investigations	There may be occasions when a child may be removed from the care of a foster carer due to concerns regarding the care of that child, and require a formal investigation. In these circumstances, the foster carer will not be in a position to accept another child. The payment of fees during the investigation is a supportive measure to ensure that the foster carer is not financially disadvantaged during this period. In such circumstances the following rates will be paid: ● Weeks 1 to 4 - 100% of the equivalent age-related fostering allowance at Level 1 ● Weeks 4 to 8 - 50% of the equivalent age-related fostering allowance at Level 1 ● No payment will be made after week 8 Only the skills element will be paid during this time, as the basic allowance is intended for the care of the child.
Caring for young people when they turn 18	When a young person turns 18 but will not be remaining under a 'Staying Put' arrangement, payments and fees will continue to be made to foster carers for up to 3 months at the full rate until alternative accommodation has been secured. If the situation remains the same after this time, payments will be paid in line with the Staying Put arrangement for a maximum of a further 3 months.

10. Mileage Public Transport Allowances

Foster carers can claim mileage or reasonable public transport costs for the following:

a) Mileage for journeys to and from school where the distance from the school to the foster carer's home is more than 14 miles round trip and where the child is not entitled to a bus pass or the child is unable to use public transport (i.e. if the round trip is 20 miles, foster carers may claim 6 miles).

b) Journeys to and from court if outside Hackney.

c) Attendance at reviews, case conferences, planning meetings or any meeting within the London Borough of Hackney involving the care of the child, where the carer lives outside the London Borough of Hackney.

d) Journeys to and from hospital outside Hackney if the child has an appointment with a consultant or specialist.

e) Journeys for family time with a child's family for mileage over 14 miles round trip.

f) Payments for parking that are related to the fostering task (e.g. training, and all of the above) will be reimbursed. Foster carers will have to show proof of payment in order to have the parking fee reimbursed.

Remember: Parking **fines** will not be reimbursed by Hackney Council. Foster Carers should therefore ensure they always read parking signs and comply with them.

Mileage is paid at:

Total mileage	**451-999cc**	**1000+cc**
Mileage rate for the first 8,500 business miles	46.9p	52.2p
Mileage rate after 8,500 business miles	13.7p	14.4p

Claims must be made within 6 weeks of incurring the expense or the entitlement to claim is lost. The request for payment should be made via the Fostering Social Worker.

Carers cannot claim for the following journeys:

a) Family time with a child's family if the mileage is less than 14 miles round trip

b) Transport to school where this is less than 14 miles round trip from the carers home

c) Taking and collecting a child from social activities, trips and contact with friends

d) Visits to routine medical and dental appointments

e) Foster carers are generally responsible for the journey to and from training. Hackney Council will pay for journeys to and from training for Core Training at Level 1, covering the 6 training courses listed in the Training Policy.

f) Attendance at reviews, case conferences, planning meetings or any meeting within the London Borough of Hackney involving the care of the child where the carer lives locally.

Carers cannot claim for the following travel expenses:

- Congestion charge
- Tolls
- Parking fines – it is the foster carer's responsibility to ensure they are complying with parking regulations (e.g. parking in the right place and not over staying past the amount of time paid for).

11. Recovery of Overpayments

Overpayments of allowances or fees to foster carers are recoverable in full, from the start of the overpayment period.

If the Finance hub is making payments to the carer at the time when the overpayments are noted, the Finance hub will do the following:

- Where the overpaid amount is less than one week's allowance, the overpayment will be automatically deducted and recovered in full from the next payment.

- Where the overpayment exceeds one week's payment, the carer will be contacted and notified. A 50% deduction will be made from existing allowances until the overpayment is repaid in full. Where deductions can not be recovered due to the foster carer not having a child in their care, an invoice will be raised.
- Not all overpayments are clear-cut and where there are more complex issues to consider, these will be dealt with on an individual basis.

If there are no ongoing allowance payments being made, an invoice will be sent for full repayment.

Foster carers are expected to monitor and check all payments they receive. They should discuss any problems with payments, or recovery of overpayments with their Fostering Social Worker.

Hackney Council reserves the right to start formal recovery procedures if no reasonable agreement can be reached.

12. Household and Vehicle Insurance

As a foster carer, it is very important that your insurance policy covers your foster children. You should take time to understand and be clear about how fostering children will affect your existing policy or a new insurance policy that you may apply for.

Foster carers are responsible for their own household and vehicle insurance, if applicable, to cover any claims for damages.

The Fostering Network recommends that you ask your insurance company for written confirmation that they have included your foster children on your policy. Hackney Fostering Service endorses this view.

The Fostering Network can offer a discount on household insurance.

Remember: All children fostered by you must be included in your insurance policy.

13. Benefits and Tax Credits

Being paid for fostering should not affect the amount of benefit you get if the payments come from either:

- a local council
- a voluntary organisation
- a private organisation on behalf of the local council

However please do speak to an adviser from the organisation that pays your benefit to find out more.

- Please contact HMRC for advice or on-line at: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs; or
- https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/claiming-benefits-while-fostering

Information regarding benefits is also available from the Fostering Network website:

- https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/finances/claiming-benefits

Universal Credit

There may be Universal Credit implications as a result of fostering. Individual advice will need to be sought in relation to Universal Credit as personal circumstances will vary.

Appendix A: Staying Put Arrangements

All fostered young people now have the right to remain with their foster carers until the age of 21, following a change to the law in May 2014. This is known as a staying put arrangement.

The possibility of a staying put arrangement will first of all depend on whether both the young person and the foster carer express a wish to enter into such an arrangement at the point when the young person becomes 18. If both the young person and the foster carer wish to enter into a staying put arrangement and CFS approve, we will provide advice, assistance and support in order to establish a staying put arrangement.

In all cases where the young person and the former foster carer continue to live together after the young person reaches the age of 18 and until the young person becomes 21 years old, CFS will monitor the staying put arrangement and will provide advice, assistance and support (including financial support to the former foster carer).

The young person will continue to receive support from their allocated social worker in the Leaving Care Service. Their Pathway Plan will be reviewed every 6 months to review their financial circumstances, support needs and preparation for independence.

CFS may continue supporting a young person beyond 21, following assessment of their needs. This could include finishing their course of education. Any on-going support is for expenses incurred from the course/programme, but does not include accommodation costs, except if the young person is in Higher Education.

The type of support that a former foster carer will need to provide in a staying put arrangement is likely to be different to the one provided when fostering a child. CFS will discuss with the former foster carer whether they require particular training and guidance to help support the young person prior to them turning 18. Post-18 training will also be made available, subject to the carers' needs.

Under the current Hackney Staying Put Policy carers will receive a staying put allowance of £494.59 per week, minus the housing benefits rate paid directly to the carer (unless carer is in receipt of benefits) and any additional contributions made to the carer by the young person. We are currently consulting to get foster carers' views on this financial arrangement and will update you if any changes occur.

Upon reaching 18 years, young people will have their own income, either from wages from employment or an apprenticeship, or from Universal Credit if they are in further education or training. This income is taken into account when making the staying put arrangement. The carer will not be expected to give money to young people.

There is a Leaving Care Benefits Officer within the Finance hub that will make contact with the young person, their social worker and the carer 28 days before the young person's 18th birthday

to start the process of the online application for universal credit if the young person is eligible.

The staying put allowance comes into effect from the date of the young person's 18th birthday

Carers on Staying Put arrangements may be eligible for the same allowance and taxable income policy as foster carers. More information can be found on the HMRC Advice Sheet 236: http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/helpsheets/hs236.pdf

Appendix B: Foster Carer Skills and Experience – Allowance Only

Primary Focus

This level applies to Carers who are wishing to foster a specific child(ren), and are in the process of being assessed to look after that child(ren).

Foster Carers must:

1. *Have the ability to work as part of a team and have an awareness of the importance of education.*

2. *Have the ability to understand the impact of one's own experience and be able to promote equality, diversity and the rights of the child in one's care.*

3. *Be able to promote contact with the child's parents and family.*

Range of Tasks

1. To plan and provide a safe, secure, stable and stimulating environment and a flexible response to the varied needs of individual children/young people taking into account their families' background and experience.

2. To help children/young people return home to their family as quickly and safely as possible or to move to a long term foster carer or independent living.

3. To ensure the health and safety of children/young people within the home.

4. To help children/young people cope with separation and loss and come to terms with past life experience.

5. To work with children/young people by providing consistent boundaries to behaviour, by managing that behaviour appropriately and helping the children/young people to change and improve.

6. To help children/young people maintain a positive view of their family as far as possible. To support contact with family and friends if appropriate facilitate contact.

7. To help children/young people go to school or college and reach their potential. To support their educational progress by active involvement in their school. To support their development of independent living skills.

8. To help and encourage children/young people to grow in confidence and self-esteem and to develop a positive identity.

9. To keep the children/young person's social worker fully informed.

10. To work within agreed plans for the children/young person and their families. To follow guidance from the Fostering Social Worker, other Children and Young People staff and to work closely with all professionals involved.

11. To contribute to “Our Review, Our Choice” (Previously known as Children’s Reviews) and other meetings about a child or young person

12. To attend training as identified by the Fostering Social Worker and to identify own training and development needs.

13. To attend foster carer review meetings.

Qualifications

1. To be aged over 21

2. Experience with children/young people (not necessarily as a parent) or a specific relationship with a child/young person

3. To have support networks available to assist you with the fostering task

4. To live within Hackney or be able to travel to Hackney

5. To have sufficient space in the home to accommodate a child

6. To have successfully completed a Skills to Foster Group

Appendix C: Foster Carer Skills and Experience - Level 1

This should be read in conjunction with the Foster Carer Agreement

Primary Focus

1. *To provide care to looked after children and young people.*

2. *To work with children and young people who have experienced neglect or abuse and who have experienced disruption in their life.*

3. *To assist and prepare a child/young person for return to their family or to prepare them for a long term foster carer or to prepare them for independent living.*

Range of Tasks

1. To provide a safe, secure, stable and stimulating environment and a flexible response to the varied needs of individual children/young people taking into account their families, background and experience.

2. To help children/young people return home to their family as quickly and safely as possible or to move to a long term foster carer or independent living.

3. To ensure the health and safety of children/young people within the home.

4. To help children/young people cope with separation and loss and to come to terms with past life experience.

5. To work with children/young people by providing consistent boundaries to behaviour and by managing that behaviour appropriately and helping the children/young people to change and improve.

6. To help children/young people maintain a positive view of their family as far as possible. To support contact with family and friends if appropriate.

7. To help children/young people to go to school or college to reach their potential and to support their educational progress by active involvement in their school. To support the development of independent living skills.

8. To help and encourage children/young people to grow in confidence, self-esteem and to develop a positive identity.

9. To provide the opportunity for a child/young person to develop meaningful relationships and the opportunity to enhance and learn new relationship skills.

10. To keep the child/young person's social worker fully informed.

11. To contribute to “Our Review, Our Choice” (Previously known as Children’s Reviews) and other meetings about a child or young person.

12. To work within agreed plans for the children/young people and their families. To follow guidance from the Fostering Social Worker and other Children and Young People staff and to work closely with all professionals involved.

13. To attend foster carer review meetings.

14. To keep information about children/young people confidential at all times.

15. To follow the Department's policies and practices.

16. To attend all the training identified by the Fostering Social Worker and to identify one's own training and development needs.

17. To attend at least two Foster Carer Forum sessions each year.

Qualifications

1. To be aged over 21.

2. To have support networks available to assist you with the fostering task.

3. To be able to demonstrate an understanding of standard child development.

4. To be able to recognise abnormal psychological, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

5. To live within Hackney or be able to travel to Hackney.

6. To have sufficient space in the home to accommodate a child.

7. To have successfully completed a Fostering Preparation Group.

8. To be working toward completion of the Training, Support, and Development Standards (TDS) handbook (target date for completion must be 12 months from the date of Approval or 18 months for friends and family carers).

9. To complete the ‘Core Training’ programme for Hackney Foster Carers. This must be completed within **12 months** from the date of approval. The Core Training’ programme includes attendance at the following training courses;

    1. Safeguarding and Child Protection
    2. Record Keeping and Writing

3. Safe Caring and managing allegations
4. Paediatric Emergency First Aid Training
5. Equality, Diversity, and Identity
6. Attachment

Appendix D: Foster Carer Skills and Experience - Level 2

Should be read in conjunction with the Foster Carer Agreement

Primary Focus

1. *To provide care to looked after children and young people mainly of eight years and above.*

2. *To work with children and young people who have experienced neglect or abuse and who have experienced significant disruption in their life.*

3. *To assess and prepare a child/young person for return to their family or to prepare them for a long term foster carer or to prepare them for independent living.*

4. *To provide "Sleep Overs" formally known as respite to other foster carers.*

Range of Tasks

1. To provide a safe, secure, stable and stimulating environment and a flexible response to the varied needs of individual children/young people taking into account their families, background and experience.

2. To help children/young people return home to their family as quickly and safely as possible or to move to a long term foster carer or independent living.

3. To ensure the health and safety of children/young people within the home.

4. To help children/young people cope with separation and loss and to come to terms with past life experience.

5. To work with children/young people who have challenging and/or difficult behaviour by providing consistent boundaries to behaviour by managing that behaviour appropriately and helping the children/young people to change and improve.

6. Ability to care for looked after children with a physical or intellectual disability.

7. To help children/young people maintain a positive view of their family as far as possible. To promote family and friends contact and support contact if appropriate.

8. To help children/young people to go to school or college and to reach their potential. To support their educational progress by active involvement in their school and to support the development of independent living skills.

9. To help and encourage children/young people to grow in confidence, self-esteem and to develop a positive identity.

10. To provide the opportunity for a child/young person to develop meaningful relationships and the opportunity to enhance and learn new relationship skills.

11. To assess the specific needs of children/young people and to keep records about their development and progress.

12. To keep the child's/young person's social worker fully informed.

13. To contribute to Our Review, Our Choice" (Previously known as Children's Reviews) and other meetings about a child or young person.

14. To work within agreed plans for the children/young people and their families. To follow guidance from the Fostering Social Worker, other Children and Young People staff and to work closely with all professionals involved.

15. To attend foster carer reviews.

16. To keep information about children/young people confidential at all times.

17. To follow the Department's policies and practices.

18. To attend training as identified by the Fostering Social Worker and to identify own training and development needs.

19. To attend at least two Foster Carer Forum sessions each year

20. To support the fostering recruitment unit by attending at least one fostering recruitment event each year

Qualifications

1. To live within Hackney or to be able to travel to Hackney. You will be expected to attend training and meetings in Hackney. You may also be required to bring children to school and contact visits in the borough.

2. To have sufficient space in the home to accommodate a child.

3. To have successfully completed the Skills to Foster Training.

4. To have completed Training, Support, and Development Standards (TDS) handbook.

5. To have a minimum of 12 months fostering experience or to have experience in a relevant childcare profession, e.g. education, health, social work.

6. To have completed the ‘Core Training’ programme for Hackney Foster Carers.

7. To have attended a minimum of six Level 2 training courses as identified at the first Foster Carer Review.

8. To be aged over 21.

9. To have support networks available to assist you with the fostering task.

10. To work not more than 20 hours per week outside the home

Appendix E: Foster Carer Skills and Experience - Level 3

This description gives an overview of the role, experience and expectations of Level 3 foster carers. Foster carers were consulted during the development of this description to ensure that there are flexible and appropriate paths to becoming a Level 3 carer.

This should be read in conjunction with the Hackney Foster Carer Agreement.

Primary Focus

1. *To provide care to looked after children and young people from 0-18 years. This can also include young people who are remanded by the Courts to the care of the Local Authority.*

2. *To work with children and young people who have experienced neglect or abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) and who have experienced significant disruption in their life.*

3. *To assess and prepare a child/young person for return to their family, prepare them for permanency (adoption, Special Guardianship Order and long term fostering) or to prepare them for independent living.*

4. *To provide planned 'sleep-overs' (previously known as respite) to other foster carers if you have the space/ availability.*

5. *To act as a mentor to another foster carer.*

6. *Co-facilitate training and participate in the recruitment of foster carers*

Range of Tasks

1. To plan and provide a safe, secure, stable and stimulating environment and a flexible response to the varied needs of individual children/young people taking into account their family, background and experience.

2. To help children/young people return home to their family as quickly and safely as possible or to move to a long term foster family or independent living.

3. To ensure the health and safety of children/young people within the home.

4. To help children/young people cope with separation and loss and to come to terms with past life experience.
5. To work with children/young people who have challenging and/or difficult needs, by providing consistent boundaries and managing their behaviour appropriately; helping the child/young person to settle in and make positive changes.

6. To help children/young people maintain a positive view of their family as far as possible. Support contact with family & friends and if appropriate facilitate contact.

7. To help children/young people to attend school or college and to reach their potential. To support their educational progress by active involvement in their school. To support their development of independent living skills.

8. To help and encourage children/young people to grow in confidence, self-esteem and to develop a positive identity.

9. To provide the opportunity for a child/young person to develop meaningful relationships and the opportunity to enhance and learn new relationship skills.

10. To assess the specific needs of children/young people and to keep records about their development and progress.

11. To keep the child's/young person's social worker and your fostering social worker fully informed of the progress of the child in your care.

12. To contribute to “Our Review, Our Choice” (Looked After Child’s Review), and other meetings about a child or young person.

13. To work within agreed plans for the child/young person and their family. To follow guidance from the Fostering Social Worker, Child's social worker, Clinical service and to work closely with the team around the child..

14. To attend foster carer reviews.

15. To keep information about children/young people confidential at all times.

16. To follow the Department's policies and practices.

17. To attend training as identified by the Fostering Social Worker and to identify own training and development needs.

18. To attend at least two Foster Carer Forums each year.

19. To lead or co-facilitate at least one training session or workshop for other foster carers and staff.

20. To attend at least two fostering recruitment sessions each year. (information session, Bitesize, Skills to foster, recruitment events)

21. To attend Court and give evidence if required.

22. To provide sleep overs (formerly known as respite care) if the carer has a vacancy, or be able to offer some practical support or advice to another in-house foster carer who could be struggling to settle a child in their care.

23. To undertake any other associated fostering task negotiated in advance.

24. To work with young people placed in their care who are charged with a criminal offense.

25. To be available to attend the police station if the young person in their care is interviewed by the police.

26. To be available to provide accommodation under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

27. If the carer has a vacancy to be available to accept Out of Hours placements.

Qualifications

1. To have successfully completed a Skills to Foster Training.

2. To have completed the Training, Support, and Development Standards (TSD) handbook.

3. To have completed the 'Core Training' programme for Hackney Foster Carers.

4. To have attended minimum of **six Level 1** and **six Level 2** training courses

5. A minimum of 3 years fostering experience or to have transferable skills in a related field, e.g. education, health or social work, or to have successfully parented a child with challenging behavior.

How to become a Level 3 Foster Carer

Complete the Level 3 Skills portfolio, please refer to appendix 1, showing evidence of:

1. Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of child development and attachment

1. Ability to recognise and appropriately respond to children who have challenging, complex emotional and behavioural needs; or ability to provide high quality care to children who are registered disabled.

2. Being able to support planned and unplanned endings, working closely with professionals and clinical service.

3. Ability to take care of children known to have been sexually abused

4. Evidence of completion of a recognised training related to the care of children and young people: Such as NCFE CACHE Level 3 Diploma for Children and Young People's Workforce (or equivalent);

5. **OR** evidence of a practical route to level 3. This would include evidencing a significant contribution to the recruitment, support and retention of foster carers including one or more of the following additional responsibilities for a minimum period of one year including:

- Mentoring, advising or supporting other foster carers
- Significant contribution to training and development of other foster carers i.e. co-facilitating or leading a workshop or course and contributing to the "Skills to Foster" sessions
- Significant activity in the recruitment of Foster Carers
- Contribution to the retention of foster carers through running events and support groups.

Your skills portfolio will also include a range of tasks or activities and training that you agree to commit to over the coming year. Including a number of courses in specialist areas such as: parenting teenagers; caring for trafficked children and unaccompanied young people; courses offering to develop foster carers therapeutic strategies and approaches, e.g. advanced nurturing attachment course (includes Dyadic Developmental psychotherapy approach); non-violent communication and Art therapy. This list is not exhaustive.

Funding for additional training will be considered on an individual basis. Some of the providers currently used are the Consortium, PAC UK, and other approved providers. Each can be discussed with your Fostering Social Worker.

Maintaining Level 3

The list of commitments and objectives will be regularly reviewed by your Fostering Social Worker. The Fostering Support Social worker will support Foster Carer to devise their individual training and development plan for each coming year. This will be formally reviewed at the Annual Review Meeting by the Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer. If you have not met the commitments or objectives within the reviewed year the fostering social worker can recommend that you go down a level as can the Independent Reviewing Officer, at your annual review. This does not mean that you can not again move to a level 3 carer if you meet the competencies within the year.

Support

You will be seen by your fostering social worker every 4-6 weeks. More frequent visits can be booked with you if needed. Fortnightly therapeutic support groups are also offered to all foster

carers and support draws from other foster carers, experienced practitioners and the clinical service.

Appendix F: Foster Carer Skills and Experience - Level 3 Portfolio

Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of child development and attachment
Details of Experience in Managing Children/ Young People with Complex Needs including the following: ● ability to recognise and appropriately respond to complex emotional and behavioural needs ● ability to take placements of children known to have been sexually abused ● ability to provide high quality care to children who are registered disabled or children who have complex needs
If taken practical route to level 3 information on additional responsibilities and activity (minimum 1 year experience contributing to recruitment, retention or Support of Foster Carers)
or details of Qualification/training achieved : **NCFE CACHE Level 3 in Children and Young Peoples Workforce or equivalent**

If following Practical Route list other Additional Training Attended Relevant to Application i.e. short-courses
List of Commitments for the Coming Year and planned contribution to Fostering; Including Training and Development Plan/Objectives