Safeguarding and Vulnerable Children

POLICY AND PROCEDURAL DOCUMENT

GUIDE TO THE FOSTER CARER PAYMENT SCHEMES
APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016

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Review by: Team Manager, Fostering Team
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This guide is for foster carers and those who authorise payments to carers, supervising social workers and staff involved in the supervision of children in placement.

1.2 Children’s social workers are responsible for ensuring that carers receive the correct payment through the inputting of relevant details on SWIFT/Framework in respect of children who are looked after and placed with foster carers.

1.3 This guide outlines the nature and details of payments to be made to foster carers.

1.4 Please ensure that you read and understand this guidance. Advice on any aspect of these allowances is available from a supervising social worker.

1.5 Oldham Fostering Service has two different fostering schemes, mainstream fostering and One2One fostering.

1.6 Payments to mainstream carers are divided into 2 categories as follows:

- **FOSTERING ALLOWANCES** - These are remuneration and reimbursement payments. They are paid to cover the daily costs of caring for a child or young person and other payments made to cover specific costs they incur.

- **SKILLS BASED PAYMENTS** - These are fee payments, paid to carers recognising their skills, experience and qualifications in caring for children and young people based on an assessment by the fostering team.

1.7 Payments to One2One foster carers are based solely on the age of the young person in placement.

1.8 National Insurance and Tax:

- **NATIONAL INSURANCE** – All self-employed people should register to pay class 2 national insurance contributions to ensure eligibility for their pension. This registration will then require the person to complete a self-assessment for tax purposes.

- **TAX** – foster carers are not employed by the department and are therefore considered self-employed with individual responsibility for income tax and national insurance contributions.

The 2003 Finance Act introduced a new relief for foster carers. Tax paid by foster carers is now calculated on all fees and allowances however, most foster carers will not receive payments from the department that exceed the qualifying amount and these payments are therefore exempt from tax.

Social workers in the fostering service are unable to give advice on tax and benefit claims but can give you the contact details of agencies with the relevant expertise. Please see direct.gov.uk for further information.
2. **MAINSTREAM FOSTERING: BASIC FOSTERING ALLOWANCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

2.1 This is a basic weekly allowance paid for all children looked after in foster families, which varies according to the child’s age. In January 2006, Oldham’s Fostering Service introduced a new structure for allowances based on the following age bands:

- 0-4 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16 years and over

2.2 These age bands are consistent with those used by the Fostering Network and most other local authorities. This authority’s basic weekly allowance exceeds the government’s recommended minimum allowance.

2.3 Appendix A includes allowances for children in each age band.

2.4 The basic weekly fostering allowance covers:

- General maintenance including food, accommodation and related costs
- Normal replacement of clothing
- Pocket money
- Normal transport associated with any child living within a family including to and from a local school
- Routine contact with parents, siblings and relatives
- Attendance at review meetings etc
- Involvement in clubs and activities
- Keeping a record of events and memories about the child for the child

3. **SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOWANCES**

3.1 **Birthday, festival and holiday allowances**

Each child living with foster carers is entitled to the payment of one holiday allowance a year. The payment relates to the financial year April to March. The holiday allowance is paid to allow carers to take a child on holiday or to be used for holiday activities. Where the holiday is less than a week, one week’s allowance will be paid, one full week or more, two weeks allowance will be paid.

Requests to fund activities in place of a holiday will need to be discussed with the supervising social worker and appropriate figures agreed. **This allowance will only be paid to fund holidays within school term** unless there are exceptional circumstances where the holiday should be discussed and agreed by the area team’s service manager, prior to the holiday being booked.

Additional payments will be made towards the cost of birthdays, festivals and holidays as follows:

- Birthday Allowance – equivalent of one weeks basic fostering allowance
- Festival Allowance – equivalent of one weeks basic fostering allowance
- Holiday Allowance – equivalent of two weeks basic fostering allowance
More than one allowance will only be considered by the fostering team manager in a financial year when a child changes placement.

3.2 Initial clothing

A child/young person can be given an initial clothing allowance at the discretion of the service manager of up to the following amounts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years old</td>
<td>£350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 10 years old</td>
<td>£375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11- 15 years old</td>
<td>£400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 plus</td>
<td>£450</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Initial clothing grants can only be paid during the first six months that a child/young person is looked after by the department, irrespective of placements.

3.3 School uniform

The Director of Children’s Services will delegate to the fostering team manager the authority to make available to foster carers an allowance of up to £161 to assist towards the purchase of a school outfit for a child entering primary school or transferring from a primary school to a secondary school where school uniforms are required. All other replacement costs are expected to be met through the clothing element contained within the fostering allowance. The same applies to sports equipment and sports clothing.

3.4 Tools, protective clothing, etc

Where a young person who remains looked after in foster care begins work or an approved training course leading to a qualification and for which specialist equipment is required the department will delegate to the Fostering Team Manager the authority to approve up to £161 in individual cases.

3.5 Transport costs

The basic fostering allowance includes an element for travelling costs, which are part of the normal pattern of expenditure incurred in looking after foster children.

Examples of travel which the foster carer would be expected to absorb within the fostering allowance would include:

- Normal trips for medical appointments if local to the foster carer’s home.
- Transport to and from school where the school is less than three miles from the foster home.
- Attendance at reviews, case conferences and child protection meetings.
- Taking and collecting the child from social activities.
- Contact sessions

Examples of travel which may be supplemented by the department are:
• Travel to and from school where the school is more than three miles from the foster home and where the child is not entitled to a school bus pass. Foster carers may claim mileage in excess of the first three miles of each trip.

• A contribution can also be considered where transport for contact or introductions to a long-term placement are above normal contact arrangements and/or involves travelling some distance.

• The cost of travel to and from hospital where the child has frequent appointments with a hospital consultant or specialist.

• Claims for additional mileage need to be made to the supervising social worker and wherever possible considered in the Foster Placement Agreement. The fostering team manager will make authorisation for these claims.

Where public transport is used, costs will be met in full. Car travel is currently paid for at the rate of 38.7 pence per mile.

3.6 School organised holidays and trips

The department will consider meeting the cost of educational field trips and residential courses that are an integral and necessary part of the child’s school curriculum. These requests should be referred to the fostering team manager.

The department is not able to meet the cost of school organised holidays such as skiing holidays or visits to foreign countries.

3.7 Additional Items

The following additional items will be paid for by the department as they belong to the child:

• Spectacles
• Passports
• School photographs

It is expected that the costs of usual swimming lessons, dancing lessons, etc should be met from the basic allowance unless costs are in excess of £7.50 per week where the fostering team manager will have discretion to provide additional financial support.

4. FOSTER CHILDREN OF WORKING AGE

4.1 Young people aged 16 and 17 in full time education

If a young person is 16 or 17 and in full time education, carers will receive allowances as set out in Appendix A
4.2 **Employed young people**

Employed young people should pay an assessed part of their take home pay to their foster carer for board and lodgings. The After Care Service will undertake this assessment. The amount the young person pays to the foster carer will then be deducted from the basic weekly allowance. The After Care Service will make notification of this figure to the finance department. This arrangement will be reassessed following any change in employment circumstances.

4.3 **Unemployed Young People**

All children leaving school should register for national insurance and also register themselves at the appropriate time as available for work. A child unable to register for work through disability may be entitled to receive a severe disablement allowance [SDA] from his/her normal school leaving age [i.e. 16 although he/she could still be receiving full time education].

4.4 **Assessment – employed/unemployed young people**

The amount each young person will be expected to contribute will be assessed on an individual basis but as general guidance the split between the accommodation charge and personal needs allowance for a young person [including employment schemes] will be:

- Board and lodgings 25%
- Personal needs allowances [to be negotiated]

This will be calculated on the basic wage. The young person will retain all overtime and bonus payments.

A supplementary payment will be made to foster carers if the above accommodation charge falls short of the scale amount.

4.5 **Training for foster carers**

Failure to attend nominated training that has been agreed with a carer’s supervising social worker may lead to the carers being charged for the place unless there is a justifiable reason. Payment will be deducted from the carer’s fee.

5. **MAINSTREAM FOSTERING: SKILLS BASED PAYMENT SCHEME**

5.1 On the 1st January 2006, Oldham introduced a Skills Based Payment Scheme for foster carers. Under the new scheme, payments will be linked to the skills, experience and training/qualifications of the carer. The scheme recognises that fostering is an increasingly professional task and is therefore designed to encourage and reward continued professional development.

5.2 The skills based scheme will include the following five groups [see appendix B for more detailed information on the criteria for each group]:

7
• **Group 1 - basic allowance**
  Foster carers with less than six months experience of fostering or residential child care who do not meet the criteria for Group 2 but who meet the detailed skills requirements for Group 1. Any carers who through choice do not wish to progress further through the group structure.

• **Group 2 – basic allowance plus £79.38 per week skills payment per child**
  Foster carers with more than six months but less than two years experience and who meet the detailed skills requirements for Group 2. Any carers who through choice do not wish to progress further through the group structure.

• **Group 3 – basic allowance plus £158.76 per week skills payment per child**
  Foster carers who have a minimum of two years fostering experience or equivalent, and who meet the more detailed skills requirements for Group 3 carers. Any Carers who through choice do not wish to progress further through the group structure.

• **Group 4 – basic allowance plus £237.23 per week skills payment per child**
  Foster carers with a minimum of two years fostering experience or equivalent and who hold a QCF in Caring for Children and Young People or equivalent and who meet the more detailed skills requirements for Group 4 carers.

• **Group 5 – basic allowance plus £340.76 per week skills payment per child**
  Foster carers who meet the detailed criteria for Group 4 and who care for a child assessed as having additional needs.

5.3 Carers in Groups 4 and 5 would be expected to hold an NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People/QCF Level 3 Diploma or equivalent. The latter may include carers with a relevant professional qualification in working with children and young people [see Appendix B] and who have also completed a competency-based assessment, preparation to foster training and the relevant aspects of the core training and development programme.

5.4 Family and friends carers are able to participate in the Skills Based Payment Scheme subject to meeting the full criteria for each group, including satisfying the full competency based assessment required for Group 2.

5.5 Further details of the Skills Based Scheme are included at Appendix B.

6 **ONE2ONE FOSTERING: PAYMENTS CRITERIA**

Payments to One2One foster carers are based solely on the age of the young person in placement. This is to reflect the complex nature of One2One placements.

Age groups and amounts are included in Appendix A.
One2One foster carers
Foster carers who hold, or are able and willing to work towards, Diploma level 3 and who care for a young person with a high level of complex needs. The foster carer will be part of the team around the child and will engage with regular therapeutic input to help them support and manage the young person’s placement. They will also support the young person to engage with weekly therapy where appropriate; with a view to matching as a long-term placement.

Carers will provide respite support to other specialist carers when appropriate.

7 GENERAL PAYMENT ISSUES

7.1 Payments to carers
Payments are made to foster carers on a weekly basis into a bank/building society account by BACS.

7.2 Start and end payments
For introduction to a placement, a day rate will be paid. A placement will be viewed as attracting a full 24 hours fee both for the day of commencement and the day of termination of the placement.

7.3 Payments during introductory visits/rehabilitation plans
During introductions to a foster placement and where an overnight stay is undertaken, payments will be made at the pro rata allowance.

If the child or young person is already placed with another foster carer then that carer will continue to be paid for up to two days at full rate for each absence. Any further absences of the young person to the prospective carers beyond two days will necessitate the allowance for the child ceasing, although the carers will continue to receive the appropriate remuneration. Payment ceases to the original carer when the permanent transfer takes place.

The same criteria apply when a child is away overnights during rehabilitation to the birth family.

7.4 Admission to hospital
For the first week of a child/young person’s admission to hospital, carers will receive the full basic allowance and for subsequent weeks half the allowance. The allowance paid is to reimburse carers for visiting, taking gifts and meeting the child/young person’s personal needs. Pocket money and clothing allowance should continue to be paid at the full scale. Foster carers will also continue to receive the skills-based element where the plan is for the child to return to the foster placement on discharge from hospital. If in the unfortunate event a child dies whilst in placement, the service will continue to pay the skills based payment for a further four weeks.
7.5 Family link and short break services

Carers providing short breaks for children will receive a daily payment based on 1/7th of the basic fostering allowance and 1/7th of the skills based payment for the relevant group for which the carer has been assessed. Carers will receive the relevant daily amount for each 24-hour period or part of a 24-hour period or part 24-hour period.

7.6 Payments during investigations

Allegations of abuse made against foster carers are subject to safeguarding procedures, [see separate policy ‘Allegations of abuse against foster carers’]. Following a strategy meeting, in certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the foster child to remain in placement with their foster carers.

In cases where the children are moved from the foster home due to the nature of the allegations, or where a carer is suspended from caring for children whilst investigations are undertaken, a retainer may be payable. The payment will be authorised by the service manager or team manager.

The rate of the retainer is based on the skills based payment related to the number of children previously placed. The retainer will be paid until the investigation is concluded or for a 12-week period from the date of the strategy meeting, whichever occurs first.

If the investigation is not concluded within 12 weeks of the strategy meeting the rate paid will be reduced by 50% for up to 4 weeks or until the conclusion of the investigation or termination of approval, whichever occurs first. Every effort will be made to ensure that there is no unnecessary delay in reviewing the approval of the foster carer.
APPENDIX A

MAINSTREAM FOSTERING: ALLOWANCES AND SKILLS BASED PAYMENTS (FROM 01/04/15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Skills Payment</th>
<th>Allowance</th>
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</tr>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 plus</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>215.74</td>
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<td>79.38</td>
<td>125.09</td>
<td>204.47</td>
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<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>79.38</td>
<td>142.52</td>
<td>221.90</td>
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<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>79.38</td>
<td>177.38</td>
<td>256.76</td>
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<td>158.76</td>
<td>142.52</td>
<td>301.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>158.76</td>
<td>177.38</td>
<td>336.14</td>
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<td>340.76</td>
<td>177.38</td>
<td>518.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 plus</td>
<td>340.76</td>
<td>215.74</td>
<td>556.50</td>
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ONE2ONE FOSTERING: PAYMENTS (FROM 01/04/15)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>£550</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>£575</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 plus</td>
<td>£600</td>
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APPENDIX B

MAINSTREAM FOSTERING: CRITERIA FOR SKILLS BASED PAYMENTS

The Skills Based Payment Scheme applies to both local authority foster carers who care for children not previously known to them and to connected people who care for specific children who are previously known to them, subject to the carer meeting the criteria required for the relevant group payment.

The following sections set out the detailed criteria, which will be used when undertaking skills based assessments. These will be based on evidence provided in the carer’s own portfolio and by the fostering team’s assessment.

Carer’s progression through the payment scheme

Carers can progress through payment groups 2, 3 and 4 as they acquire the relevant skills, experience and qualifications. Any carer wishing to move to a higher group should notify their supervising social worker in writing with the evidence to support their application.

The length of experience of fostering will be measured from the date of the first placement.

The supervising social worker will then undertake skills based assessment using the criteria outlined in the payment guidance. This assessment will be completed within four weeks of receipt of the written request from the carer. If the applicant is successful the increase in payment will commence from the date of receipt of the written request from the carer.

In relation to groups 2 and 3 the fostering team manager will consider the assessment and recommendation by the supervising social worker for approval. Where applications are made for groups 4 and 5 the service manager will also consider the assessment together with the fostering team manager and make a recommendation.

Where an application to progress through the payments scheme is not supported by the supervising social worker or relevant manager, the foster carer has the right to appeal this decision. Where appropriate this appeal will be considered by the service manager for applications for groups 2 and 3 and by representation at foster panel through the foster panel procedures for group 4 and 5.

Foster carers who have previously been employed in registered/regulated [OFSTED] child care setting with direct responsibility for the day to day care of children with complex emotional and behavioural needs may accelerate through the skills based payment scheme if all the other relevant criteria for the group are met. This employment needs to have been for a minimum of two years and have ended no more than five years previous to the carer’s registration of interest with this service.

The relevance of this experience must be reflected in the assessment and in the terms of subsequent approval; e.g. residential experience with teenagers may not be relevant to the task of caring for 0-4 yrs.

Foster carers who have previously been approved by a registered fostering agency and fostered children for a period of two years or more may accelerate through the skills based payment scheme if all the relevant criteria for the group applied for are met. This fostering experience will need to have ended no more than five years previous to the carer’s registration of interest with this service.
Foster carers who have previously worked in residential child care with a registered agency for a period of two years or more may accelerate through the skill based payment scheme if all the relevant criteria for the group applied for are met. This work experience will need to have ended no more than five years previous to the carer’s registration of interest with this service.

N.B:

Oldham Fostering Service will reserve the right to move a foster carer to a lower group where the foster carer is considered responsible for not continuing to meet the requirements of their group. Examples of this may include, non-attendance at training/development events identified through supervision, ceasing to contribute to the fostering services as identified in their skills based assessment. Examples of this may include mentoring roles or recruitment events.

Failure to complete the CWDC standards within the required timescales without reasonable cause will jeopardise continuing approval as a foster carer.

On the rare occasion where this action may be considered, any concerns will be raised and recorded in supervision with the foster carer and subsequently in the foster carers’ annual review. This review can be ‘brought forward’ if appropriate. The fostering team manager and service manager who will make a decision will consider the review report. The foster carer has the right to appeal this decision by representation at foster panel through the foster panel procedures.
Group 1 carers [age related basic allowances]

Group 1 carers include:

- Foster carers caring for children not previously known to them who have attended preparation to foster training, successfully completed a full competency based assessment, have been approved by the fostering panel and the agency decision maker and who have less then six months experience of fostering.

- Family and friends carers who are caring for a specific child who is previously known to them and are in the process of completing a competency based assessment.

- All foster carers who do not wish to progress further through the skills based scheme.

- Foster carers who meet the following minimum criteria for Group 1 carers:
  
  o Successful completion of preparation to foster training
  o Completion of preparation to foster training and attendance at support groups are not requirements for family and friends carers receiving Group 1 payment. However family and friends carers are entitled to a level of support, supervision, annual review, training and development opportunities comparable with that offered to other carers within Group 1. All carers who wish to progress further through the skills based structure will need to meet all the relevant criteria for the particular group.
  o Foster carers who have undertaken any training specified at the point of approval or subsequently through supervision, or annual review, which is identified as necessary by the supervising social worker.
  o Foster carers who can demonstrate the following minimum skills:

  **Caring for children**

  - An ability to provide a good standard of care to other people's children which promotes healthy, emotional, physical and sexual development as well as their health and educational achievement.
  - An ability to work closely with children's families, and others who are important to the child.
  - An ability to set appropriate boundaries, and manage children's behaviour within these, without the use of physical or other inappropriate punishment.
  - Knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen to and communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding.

  **Providing a safe and caring environment**

  - An ability to ensure that the children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.
  - An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse, and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened.

  **Working as part of a team**

  - An ability to work with other professional people and contribute to the department's planning for the child/young person.
  - An ability to communicate effectively.
• An ability to keep information confidential.
• An ability to promote equality, diversity and the rights of individuals and groups within society.

Own development

• An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected themselves and their families, and the impact that fostering is likely to have on them all.
• An ability to have people and links within the community, which provide support.
• An ability to use training opportunities and to improve skills.
• An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.

Group 2 carers

Group 2 carers include:

• Foster carers with more than six months but less than two years post approval experience as foster carers who have successfully completed a Competency Based Assessment and who have been approved by the fostering panel and the agency decision maker and who have successfully completed preparation to foster training.
• Foster carers who do not wish to progress further through the skills based scheme.
• Foster carers who meet all of the following additional criteria for Group 2 foster carers:
  • Foster carers who have demonstrated evidence of competency in each of the basic skills for Group 1 carers.
  • Foster carers who have attended a minimum of 50% of support group meetings
  • Foster carers who are undertaking the core training programme
  • Foster carers who have undertaken any training specified at the point of approval or subsequently through supervision or annual review which is identified as necessary by the supervising social worker

Group 3 carers

Group 3 carers include:

• Foster carers who meet all the relevant criteria for Group 2 carers and who, in addition, have a minimum of two years of fostering or residential experience and who also meet the other criteria for Group 3 carers.
• Foster carers who meet the following additional criteria for Group 3 carers:
  o Foster carers who have successfully completed all elements of the core training programme i.e.
    • First aid
    • Promoting educational achievements
    • Basic child protection
    • The health needs of looked after children
    • Child development
    • Preparation for leaving care
  o Foster carers who have undertaken any training specified at the point of approval or subsequently through supervision, performance appraisal or
annual review which is identified as necessary by the supervising social worker

- Foster carers who have completed satisfactory annual reviews
- Foster carers who have and can provide evidence of the following eight key skills in addition to those required for Group 1 and 2 carers:

  - An ability to help children develop appropriate social behaviour, helping them to become more independent, and enabling them to cope with their emotions as appropriate to their age and ability
  - An ability to assist children develop basic aspects of memory, thinking, imagination and manipulative skills through play, etc
  - An ability to help children develop their language skills and general self expression
  - An ability to help children learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour without resorting to physical punishment, and within the requirements of current policy, handle children’s negative reactions and unacceptable behaviour, and encourage positive behaviour patterns
  - An ability to plan for and provide an appropriate routine for children which balances the child’s needs, including those of play and learning, and gives goals which can be achieved in measuring the child’s level of understanding and development
  - An ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect
  - An ability to observe and assess children, clearly recording development
  - An ability to challenge appropriately, to ensure that foster care practice is anti-discriminatory and respects all children and their families, and advocate on behalf of children

And, in addition, can offer four of the following six skills:

  - An ability to help children and families cope with loss and bereavement – this may be because of life threatening illness, separation through adoption, or loss of their family
  - An ability to work closely with other professionals in carrying out individual therapeutic programmes, skills development, behaviour modification or educational programmes with children with appropriate supervision and consultation
  - An ability to work closely with other professionals, sharing information, exchanging skills, and working under the guidance of, or in collaboration with, other professionals involved with the child
  - An ability and willingness to assist with the recruitment of other foster carers
  - An ability and willingness to assist with the training of other foster carers
  - An ability and willingness to act as a formal mentor to other foster carers
N.B:

There is no expectation that carers would undertake all these tasks as the same time. They will however, need to demonstrate their ability to undertake them and be available and willing to do so depending on the demands of individual placements. This approach allows some carers to take on responsibilities for a supportive role in relation to other carers whilst some may choose to further develop their childcare skills. If the fostering service is not using a particular carer’s skills this does not signify that the carer should lose the Group 3 payment. It is the agency’s responsibility to use carer’s skills appropriately.

- All foster carers who meet the above criteria for Group 3 but who do not wish to progress to Group 4.

**Group 4 carers**

Group 4 carers include:

- Foster carers who, in addition to meeting the criteria for Group 3 carers, have also successfully completed an NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People [or equivalent, or QCF Level 3 Diploma. This may include carers with other relevant professional qualifications in working with children and young people e.g. in social work, childcare, teaching or youth work and who also meet the other criteria for Group 4 carers. Where qualifications other than NVQ 3 in Child Care or QCF Level 3 Diploma are considered the applicant needs to provide a copy of their certificate and details of the course content to evidence the equivalent status of the qualification. The fostering team manager together with the service manager will consider the relevance of this qualification.

- Foster carers who meet the following additional criteria for Group 4 carers:
  
  o An ability to care for children assessed as presenting behaviour which causes significant management problems
  o Maintain an awareness and knowledge of current legislation and current issues in child care and good practice
  o An ability to offer the eight key skills for Group 3 carers and four of the following eight additional skills:

    - An ability to help children and families cope with loss and bereavement – this may be because of life threatening illness, separation through adoption, or loss of their family
    - To work closely with other professionals in carrying out individual therapeutic programmes, skills development, behaviour modification or educational programmes with children with appropriate supervision and consultation
    - An ability to take responsibility for individual programmes of skills development for children and work with them and their parents and other professionals to achieve the goals of the programme
    - Where appropriate, to work alongside professional colleagues to prevent the removal of children from their home environment
    - An ability and willingness to supervise those contact visits where it is not deemed desirable for contact to occur without a third party and where it cannot happen in the child’s current placement
• An ability and willingness to assist with the recruitment of other foster carers
• An ability and willingness to assist with the training of other foster carers
• An ability and willingness to act as a formal mentor to other foster carers

NB:

There is no expectation that carers would undertake all these tasks as the same time. They will however, need to demonstrate their ability to undertake them and be available and willing to do so depending on the demands of individual placements. This approach allows some carers to take on responsibilities for a supportive role in relation to other carers whilst some may choose to further develop their childcare skills. If the fostering service is not using a particular carer’s skills this does not signify that the carer should lose the Group 4 payment. It is the agency’s responsibility to use carer’s skills appropriately.

• All foster carers who meet the above criteria for Group 4 but who do not wish to take on the additional responsibilities of Group 5 carers.

Group 5 carers

• In addition to the range of placements provided by carers in Groups 1 – 4, it is envisaged that Oldham will require a limited number of placements for children assessed as having additional needs.

Foster carers will qualify for Group 5 payments for individual children if they meet the relevant criteria for Group 4 carers and, in addition, care for a child assessed with additional needs.

NB:

Group 5 payments are directly linked to the additional needs of individual children and will be limited to approximately 20 placements at any one time. This means, for example, that where carers who take responsibility for a child who attracts a Group 5 payment are already receiving a Group 4 payment for another child, they will continue to receive a Group 4 payment for the first child.

Additional Notes

• It is expected that Group 3 and 4 carers will be available to the child for most of the time. Work outside the home would usually be limited to no more than 16 hours per week as long as this has been discussed with the supervising social worker and agreed by the fostering team manager or service manager. This must be compatible with the fostering task and the needs of the child/children in placement. For Group 5 carers, it is expected that the main carer would have no other employment commitments.