

Standard charges for the use of Residential Homes and Foster Carers, Sharing Care, Adoption and Residence Order Weekly Allowances

- 1 The following schedules set out the proposed level of charges to other local authorities for the use of services within the Children and Families portfolio for residential care homes. The annex also lists proposed foster care, sharing care, adoption, residence order and special guardianship weekly allowances for 2012/13. It is proposed to freeze the majority of these rates at the 2011/12 level, the exception being the Foster Carer Weekly Allowances / Special Guardianship Allowances as outlined in the paragraphs below.

Standard Weekly Charges For Residential Care Homes (Annex 3a)

- 2 A source of income for Children & Families is derived from charges to other local authorities for purchasing services e.g. North Yorkshire Social Services Department who purchase residential and day care places for individuals who continue to be their responsibility. Many of this group of people are either resident in, or regular users of, residential and non-residential services.
- 3 There is a requirement for the directorate to set these standard charges both to charge other authorities and to set the maximum charge payable by residents. The proposed charges for 2012/13 have been frozen for both Wenlock Terrace and The Glen to reflect the amounts that can realistically be charged.

Minimum Payment For Foster Carers (Annex 3b)

- 4 A basic allowance is paid for each child/young person in a placement. Payments are calculated on a weekly basis according to the age of the child. The Government sets statutory minimum weekly allowances for foster carers. The weekly allowances set out at Annex 4b for Age Bands 0-4, 5-10 and 11-15 have been increased at a rate necessary to match the national minimum fostering rates levels. In practice this has led to increases of between 1.7% and 2.4%. The weekly rate paid for children aged between 16-17 is currently above the 2011/12 national rate (£168): following negotiations with foster carers it is proposed to apply an increase of 2.3% for 2011/12.

- 5 Foster carers are also paid a weekly carer's skill premium. These premiums are calculated with reference to an appraisal of the carer's skill level.
- 6 The Placement Strategy for Looked After Children established a specialist scheme that enhances the recruitment and retention of foster carers, who look after young people with exceptional needs in relation to their emotional and behavioural difficulties or severe disability. Foster carers are specifically selected for the new scheme to be matched with specific young people.
- 7 This is incorporated into the shaded area at the foot of the lower table in Annex 3b.

Additional Foster Carers Weekly Allowances (Annex 3c)

- 8 In addition to the allowances detailed above further allowances are paid to foster carers. A further weeks allowance is payable for birthdays and Christmas, and a further three weeks allowance will be payable for holidays taken during the year. Additional allowances are shown in Annex 3c.

Weekly Adoption Allowances and Residence Order Allowances (Annex 3d)

- 9 A weekly allowance is not paid in all cases of adoption, only in certain financial circumstances, or when a disabled child is adopted or possibly to encourage the adopter to take a sibling of a child already adopted. To determine whether an allowance should be paid to an adopter a financial assessment is carried out, using the DfE suggested assessment model.
- 10 A small number of children in our care are subject to residence orders that replaced custodianship in 1991. A residency order means that the birth parents retain parental responsibility but the carer gains parental rights. As with adoption, a financial assessment of the carer is undertaken to determine whether an allowance should be given.

Sharing Care & Sitting Service Allowances (Annex 3e)

- 11 Sharing care is provided for disabled children who attend a temporary carer on either a day care or overnight basis, in order to give the parent or regular carer a break. The sitting service provides for temporary carers to look after children in their own homes.

- 12 The Sharing Care Contract Carer Scheme recruits carers to provide regular, usually overnight, respite care for severely disabled children. The Contract Carers are paid a weekly allowance which is equal to the allowance paid to Specialist Foster Carers. This is shown in the bottom table of Annex 3e

Special Guardianship Allowances (Annex 3f)

- 13 A Special Guardianship Order allows carers to gain parental responsibility and enables them to override the parental responsibility of others (such as the child's birth parent) in day-to-day matters. Under legislation, Special Guardians must be offered support services, including financial support, if requested, subject to the same financial assessment as adopters. The allowances for Special Guardians are set at the same rate as the Foster Care weekly allowances; however, an amount equivalent to the Child Benefit entitlement will be deducted from the allowance before it is paid. Annex 3f shows the revised allowances for 2012/13.

Care Leavers Weekly Accommodation Allowance

- 14 In addition to the allowances shown, a weekly accommodation allowance is paid to Care Leavers. The 2011/12 allowance was £52 per week; it is currently proposed to keep the allowance at this level. However, this may change as the amount paid must be higher than the Job Seeker's allowance, which has not yet been confirmed for 2012/13.

Rounding

- 15 The figures shown for all weekly allowances have been rounded to the nearest figure in whole pence that can be divided exactly by 7. This is done so that the weekly allowances can easily be converted into daily amounts when processing payments.