



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

HSE Guidance on the purpose and use of the Foster Care Allowance

This is a guidance document only and therefore should not be read or interpreted as a policy statement

The foster care allowance is in respect of and for the benefit of the foster child and therefore must be used to meet the day to day costs associated with looking after a foster child. It is not a payment or salary to foster carers.

Fostering involves caring for very vulnerable children and it is CFSS expectation that these children would experience equality of care and opportunity within a foster family.

It must be acknowledged from the outset that many foster carers go above and beyond the call of duty when caring for their foster child and this is very much appreciated by Children and Family Services. However, in order to give some clarity the following guidance has been prepared in partnership with the Irish Foster Care Association.

The allowance should cover the provision of the following, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- Appropriate clothing and footwear
- Personal care items and toiletries
- Appropriately decorated bedrooms and bed linen
- Hobbies and sporting activities
- Holidays and summer camps
- Pocket money (see below).
- Special occasions such as religious celebrations, birthdays, Christmas etc.
- School transport and any educational requirements including grinds
- Treats and toys
- Gifts for the birth family (see below).
- Travel bag/case (the use of black bags/plastic bags is strictly forbidden for children's clothes)
- They should be expected to cover the costs of transporting the children to and from access unless the access is of 150km or more round trip whereby an allowance of .32cent per km will be paid. This will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Pocket money

It is recognised that each child is different and each foster parent has differing views on pocket money.

While it is respected that pocket money may not be a practice in certain families the CFSS advises that children over 12 are given some pocket money. This is to teach them the value of money and to encourage saving for personal items. If there are any queries or concerns about this issue, they should be discussed with the Child's social worker or the fostering link worker.

The CFSS expects that in relation to pocket money, as in all other areas of the child's life, foster children are treated the same as the foster carer's birth children.

Savings

Some foster parents/carers want to save money during the foster placement to help the child financially when they reach 18 years of age.

Carers should discuss with the bank or Credit Union the legal aspects regarding ownership and signatories of any saving account prior to opening one.

Gifts for the birth family

Foster carers should try to ensure that the young person has a token/small gift for their foster child's birth family at Christmas, birthdays, mothers/fathers' day or for other significant events in the child's family's life. This should be done in consultation with the child where age appropriate.

Access

Foster carers are not required to pay the costs associated with access such as payments to birth parents or for venue. They are, however, expected to transport the child to and from access visits, where it is possible and appropriate to do so.

Foster Carers are encouraged to ensure, where appropriate, that their foster child has some small monies for their own use when attending access.

All access arrangements should be organised in consultation between the social worker, foster carer and birth family.



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Aftercare

It is expected that young people leaving home are provided with the basics for setting up independently. This may include taking their own duvet and pillow, towels and the standard items that any child leaving home would expect from parents when moving to college or independent living.

IFCA was part of the group that negotiated this document. Queries have been raised in relation to the last item under the list of what provisions the allowance should cover, 'They (foster carers) should be expected to cover the costs of transporting the children to and from access unless the access is of 150km or more round trip whereby an allowance of .32cent per km will be paid. This will be reviewed on a case by case basis'.

This provision needs to be read in conjunction with the section on 'Access'.

Foster carers are only expected to cover their own costs of transporting children to and from access and to facilitate transport only 'where it is possible and appropriate to do so'.

If you have any queries or encounter any problems in the interpretation of this document please contact the IFCA Office.

If you have queries on any of these policies/guidelines please contact the IFCA Office.

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Irish Foster Care Association