

Frequently asked questions by Foster Carers and Carers Transitioning to Special Guardianship Payments

Q. Should I be completing a self-assessment every year for HMRC?

A. Foster carers are classed as Self-employed. Please see the advice given on HMRC's website or alternatively seek guidance from your accountant. Adult & Children's Financial Services (ACFS) are not qualified in giving any financial advice. We are a transactional team only.

[HS236 Qualifying care relief: foster carers, adult placement carers, kinship carers and staying put carers \(2024\) - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](#)

ACFS no longer send out an annual statement of payments made by our department as this does not pick up any repayments made, or payments paid by other departments so is not accurate for self-assessment purposes. HMRC currently require you to keep your financial records for at least 5 years from 31 Jan following the tax year that the tax return relates to. This is inclusive of all remittance slips.

Q. I am remortgaging/applying for a mortgage and require proof of being an approved foster carer – Is this something that Adult & Children's Financial Services can assist with?

A. Unfortunately ACFS are not able to assist with this as we are a transactional team only. Fostering allowances and fees are not a guaranteed source of income, it's a payment made for a service given. When the service ends so does the payment in most cases. We are unable to provide a payment summary or forecasts of payments. We would advise that you use all your fortnightly remittance slips as your proof of payments received from the local authority.

Carers are classed as self-employed. Any loans or mortgages are taken out at your own risk. Please seek independent financial advice.

We have been advised that the Fostering Network have partnered with the Mortgage Brain to offer specific mortgage advice for their members. They can be contacted by phone on 0800 987 1700 or email info@themortgagebrain.net

Q. I am registered as a foster carer with a partner/spouse - Can the remittance slips be in my name only?

A. As jointly approved foster carers, the payments you receive must clearly be in both of your names. This also applies to any overpayments or invoices we seek recovery of.

Q. I have lost a remittance slip – Can a copy be provided?

A. Yes – please email Accounts Payable, they should be able to assist, but your request will not be treated as a priority by this team
ap@staffordshire.gov.uk

Q The fortnightly remittances do not give enough information and are difficult to understand, can any changes be made to them?

A. Unfortunately these are produced by a third party, no changes can be requested or made. Please see supporting document "Remittance Guide"

Q. I have been overpaid - Will this be recouped in one go? Will I be notified in advance when this happens?

A. As foster carers are self-employed, the expectation is for you to be checking your remittance slips every fortnight, therefore you should be aware of an overpayment. Overpayments should be left untouched in your bank account as we will always seek to recover as much as possible from any scheduled payments to clear the debt. Any debts recovered in this way will be shown as 'Recoup one off' or 'Recoup ongoing' on your remittance slip. Due to the numerous amounts of recoups we have to do each week, ACFS do not have the resources to contact carers who have been overpaid, our priority is always to input payments to carers.

Q. I have had a recoupment for a child no longer is in my care, leaving the remaining child financially disadvantaged.

A. As with the above answer, you should always be aware of any overpayment, this can then go towards any deficit in the following pay run/s that show a recoup. The overpayment is funds you should not have received and therefore any recoups in your payments **would not** financially disadvantage any remaining children.

Q. Why have I not been paid any annual one-off allowances such as birthday or festive allowance?

A. This may be a payment paperwork related issue – please speak to your Supervising Social Worker to resolve this issue.

Q. My foster child doesn't celebrate Christmas; can I request the festive allowance at a different time of year?

A. Yes, we can pay for other religious festivals, but the festive allowance is only paid once annually to each child. If this is something you wish us to do, the request will have to go through your Supervising Social Worker every year, as certain festivals such as Eid are not annual set dates. If you have children who celebrate different festivals in one household, the guidance is to save part of the allowance for each child as additional festive allowances will not be issued.

Q. Why has the Summer Holiday Grant been recouped for a child that has recently left – I took this foster child away earlier in the year?

A. This payment is made in **advance** of the school summer break. It is not paid for any other period of the year. Should a child move placement before the summer break, it is fully reclaimable. If a child moves placement part way through the summer break, then we will recoup 1/6th of the grant for each complete week the child was not in your care. There are always exceptional circumstances, and these should be discussed with your supervising social worker.

Q. Why has Festive/Birthday allowance been recouped for a child that had recently left – I purchased presents in advance for this child/Passed this money on to the new foster carer?

A. All annual one-off allowances (festive, birthday, summer holiday grant) are reclaimable if a child moves before the period the allowance is allocated for. **Under no circumstances should any money you receive be passed over to a new carer.** There is no audit trail for this within our payment systems. We will always seek to recover any default allowance and pay to the new carer if requested/eligible. If presents have been passed on to the new carer, please let your supervising social worker know so we do not recoup, the new carer will not receive the allowance

Q. I am still waiting to be paid for a short break, who should I contact?

A. If you are outstanding a short break payment, please contact your Supervising Social Worker who is responsible for completing the paperwork that triggers the payment. ACFS will only make the payment once the paperwork has been completed and closed. Short breaks are paid retrospectively.

Q. I am a newly approved foster carer, can I send my bank details directly to fostering payments email.

A. No, the BACS form you have completed has to be verified by the social worker you have contact with for security purposes. Please send the completed form to this social worker.

Q. I am a new Family/Connected carer and have yet to be paid – what can I do as I am struggling financially

A. Unfortunately the setup of family/connected carers can take a few weeks. This is due to different departments dealing with the approval. ACFS are the last in line for this process and can only set up payments once all the other steps have been completed.

If you are struggling financially, please contact your Social Worker for them to request a Section 17 payment to be made in lieu of ACFS picking up the payments. The amount of Section 17 may not cover the full back pay owed; it will only be an emergency payment to assist you until your full payments have been picked up by our department. Any Section 17 payments will be recouped once the payments are being made via ACFS.

Q. I like to save my mileage claims up so I can have them in a lump sum, I have now been asked to submit these claims on a regular basis, why?

A. Foster carers should be submitting any expense claims on a regular basis, guidance is monthly. If left for long periods, receipts can be lost or forgotten. If we cross into a new financial year this may have implications on your self-assessment as a self-employed carer.

Claims for the previous financial year may not get processed by ACFS and may have to be paid by Section 17 causing further delays as they cannot be allocated to the correct fiscal year. Claims over 6 months old may not be processed at all.

Q. How do I find information on the savings account my placement has?

A. Your Supervising Social Worker will need to contact the Childrens Savings Team as ACFS do not hold or have access to these accounts

Q. I have had a Special Guardianship granted but my payments are still under fostering

A. The process of swapping from fostering allowance to guardianship allowances can be complicated and may take a few weeks. Once ACFS have the date the order was granted, we will add and back date any benefits you are receiving/or claimable as per financial assessment within the fostering payment to ensure your money is correct. If ACFS are not informed in a timely manner of this date, you may have been overpaid benefits, this will be reclaimed.

Once the order has been granted payments can only be sustained under "fostering" for a period of four weeks, then they will end. As the carer, please ensure you have completed and returned any documents you have been asked for as soon as possible to help prevent a break in payments

Q. I have had a Special Guardianship Order granted; will my payments decrease?

A. Staffordshire County Council have a "no financial disincentive" policy that means you are entitled to the same level of financial support as when you were fostering. However, as you are eligible for new benefits after the court order (Child Benefit, Child Related Element of Universal Credit etc...) these can be deducted from your Guardianship payments. You will not be able to claim the annual/expenses discretionary payments/claims paid when you were a foster carer.

Q. What happens to the summer grant/birthday/festive when transitioning from fostering to SGO?

A. All of the above payments are made in advance. If the SGO is granted prior to the date they allocated for, they will be reclaimed. If the SGO is granted part way through the summer break, we will recoup at 1/6th for every full week of the school hols that the child is under an SGO.

Any of the above can be repaid from the SGO budget if agreed by the Head of Service.

Q. I have swapped from fostering to SGO but I am not claiming benefits, why are benefits being deducted from my Guardianship allowance?

A. When it is identified within your assessment that you are eligible for a certain child related benefit, we are obligated to deduct this. It is up to each carer to submit applications for all eligible benefits to the Department of Work and Pensions.

Q. The child who was with me as a **foster child/Special Guardian child** has moved out to a new carer/family member, so can I transfer the payments to the new carer I have continued to receive after the placement/Guardianship ended?

A. As a **Foster Carer** you should never hand over any money to the new carer including any discretionary payments such as Summer Holiday Grant. If you are overpaid, ACFS will request this money to be repaid or recoup from your continuing payments for another child.

As a **Special Guardian** you have signed an agreement saying you will notify the local authority of any change in circumstance, also on the agreement you have signed it states – if the child no longer resides with you the payments will cease.

If ever you are told its "Ok" to hand over your payments to whoever the child is residing with - **do not do this.**

Contact ACFS immediately on fosteringpayments@staffordshire.gov.uk or orders.payments@staffordshire.gov.uk or 01785 854200