



## **A Guide for staff in One Adoption regarding Financial Support in Adoption**

**March 2022**

This information sheet is intended to give you some information about the financial support offered to adoptive families within One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY). If you have any questions, you can discuss them in more detail with your manager.

### **Initial placement costs:**

One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) do not generally pay setting up grants for children placed with adopters unless children are placed as part of a sibling group. These will be paid at a rate of £350 for the second and subsequent children placed, therefore if children are being placed as part of a two sibling group there would be a single grant of £350, for 3 children there would be a grant of £700. If there are exceptional circumstances regarding financial hardship then consideration will be given to paying a settling in grant by a service delivery manager in OAWY. The settling in grants are usually paid out on at the point of placement unless otherwise agreed by the service manager.

If adopters are being matched with a child from a local authority outside of this area, the payment may differ.

In the case of Early Permanence Placements (EPP) essential equipment is provided via a settling in grant is paid by the child's Local authority as they are foster carers (£350). Foster carer adoptions are not paid settling in grants as their set up costs should already have been paid by their Local authority earlier on.

All requests for a settling in grant need to be sent to [finance@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk](mailto:finance@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk) using the adopters expenses claim form on SharePoint.

### **Costs incurred during the matching process and introductions**

There should be early discussions between staff and managers around expenses for adopters during matching and introductions and this should be done before bookings are made. Meetings should be grouped together where possible to cut reduce the financial impact of expenses during introductions.

A daily subsistence allowance will be paid for adopters who are travelling from out of the West Yorkshire area and a maximum of up £10 per day per adult and up to £7.50 per day for an existing child within the family who are party to introductions (foster carers will continue to receive an allowance for the child) is paid to assist with additional food that needs to be bought and receipts will be required. There is a maximum claimable for the period of introductions. The daily subsistence amount is to provide support for expenses incurred from being away from home, any costs usually

incurred by families should not be claimed (e.g. weekly shopping). Additional items cannot be claimed this includes alcohol, household items and clothing.

OAWY may provide financial support for adopters attending meetings or panel as part of the matching process if there are exceptional circumstances related to financial hardship. This can be discussed with your manager if you feel there are exceptional circumstances and the costs may then be met by OAWY for those children from the 5 LA's across West Yorkshire.

If the child is the responsibility of a local authority outside West Yorkshire the financial support may vary and you will need to ask the social worker responsible for the child about the arrangements in that LA.

The travel time and distance between the adopter's home and the foster placement need to be considered as part of the introduction planning process. If it is agreed with your manager that adopters need accommodation to be introduced to children from the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities, One Adoption West Yorkshire will contribute up to £75 per night towards any accommodation booked. OAWY will require receipts for this money to be reimbursed and this must be detailed on the claim form. This must not be booked until the meetings are confirmed.

Mileage will only be paid after the first 50 miles for any period of introductions, unless there is financial hardship and this needs to be agreed by a manager. The rate of 25p per mile regardless of the type of fuel used, plus any parking fees or the cost of public transport. Families will need to provide receipts/tickets for any parking or public transport costs, and a VAT receipt for any petrol costs. Train fares should be advance tickets wherever possible and should not be booked until meetings and plans have been agreed.

Any costs incurred by Foster Carers during introductions should be paid by the child's LA.

Please complete an adopters expenses form (available on [Sharepoint](#)) to claim this money and return it to [finance@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk](mailto:finance@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk) Please note that all adopters expenses are paid via BAC's so bank details must be included.

Any expenses claims will be linked to the adoption placement and support plan completed in preparation for adoption pane as these will have been approved by a team manager.

### **Adoption Order Application**

One Adoption West Yorkshire will reimburse the £183 court fees for the adoption order for children from within the region and adopters should notify their social worker when the order has been applied for. Please complete an adopter's expenses claim form as above to process this claim.

Local Authorities outside of West Yorkshire may provide help with legal fees in order to apply for an adoption order for a child they are responsible for but this needs to be discussed with the relevant local authority as not all follow this arrangement.

### **Financial Support from the government**

Most adopters are eligible to claim adoption leave pay from their employer and adopters should make enquiries regarding this at an early stage in the adoption process. They may also be eligible to claim

child benefit and/or child tax credit once a child is placed and you can find more information about this from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

### **Statutory adoption pay**

Adopters who are employed may be eligible for statutory adoption pay. However, if an adopter is self-employed they are not entitled to statutory adoption pay. The five west Yorkshire Local authorities (LA's) have agreed to support families in these circumstances with the equivalent of statutory adoption pay, subject to a financial assessment carried out by the relevant Local authority.

### **Periodic or ongoing financial support for children with a plan for adoption**

Individual Local Authorities are responsible for considering the financial support required to support adopters for specific children. In West Yorkshire the 5 local authorities have agreed that for children with a plan for adoption the following will be eligible for financial support if:

- a child is over 5 years of age OR
- sibling group: the 2nd and subsequent child/ren placed together will be considered eligible for financial support OR
- If the child is likely to wait longer for adoption and deemed "harder to place" due to ethnicity or religious needs or due to disability or complex physical/emotional problems and/or complex health issues.

At the point of the plan for SHOBPA the agency decision maker will make a decision regarding the child's eligibility for financial support, recommended by the social worker for the child and the One Adoption West Yorkshire family finder in the documentation for the ADM and supported by the OAWY professional adoption advisor to the agency decision maker. The Family Finding manager or advanced practitioner may be a helpful point of contact if staff are unclear. The decision regarding if and why the child is eligible for financial support due to their needs should be recorded in the agency decision meeting minutes.

Once a family is identified it would be important to determine what support, including financial support, is required in order for the placement to progress to a match.

The financial assessment of the adopter would need to be completed by the relevant local authority to determine if the child is eligible for support.

Once this has been completed and if the family is eligible then the duration of the support needs to be considered and agreed given the individual needs of the child. For example:

- to establish the arrangement for a period of time (2 years) enabling the child to settle in given their early experiences in order for the family to be more available to the child OR
- if the child is likely to have ongoing and long term needs the support can be agreed until the child reaches adulthood, with an annual financial review being undertaken to ensure the circumstances remain the same.

The financial support should be recommended by the social workers and family finder and agreed prior to the match being heard at the adoption panel by the local authority nominated officer (see

page 6). This should be confirmed in the adoption support plan finance section so the agency decision maker is aware of the agreed plan of support when the match is agreed.

### **Exceptional circumstances**

For some children placed with adopters there may be exceptional circumstances that need to be considered in order to establish the placement: provision of means of transport for larger sibling groups/ adaptations/ washing/ironing support for example. These are exceptional and a financial assessment will also be required to determine eligibility.

#### **1. Guidance regarding adaptations/extensions:**

Applications to adapt present property (e.g. attic conversion, partition walls to divide bedrooms etc.) to create extra room; extend properties to create extra rooms will only be considered where required to achieve adoption for a looked after child - usually a sibling group or where a child has a specific need and to top up a Disabled Facilities Grant to provide accessible accommodation for a child with a disability. The making of grants is exceptional and will take into account the specific circumstances, in line with local housing regulations, where there is severe overcrowding. All other options for securing suitable accommodation must be considered, including moving to another rented property/local authority property and clarity regarding the carer's ability to financially contribute to any works required.

Consideration of adaptations need to reflect the housing policy regarding bedroom sharing. Bedroom entitlement is based on the number of people in the household and the age and gender of any children. Children of the same gender are expected to share a bedroom if they are both under 16 years old. Children of different genders are expected to share up to the age of 10 years. Sometimes a household may be assessed as needing an extra bedroom due to medical needs or safeguarding issues where it would be unsafe for children to share a bedroom. If the house is owned by the council each LA will have a local agreement with the housing department regarding sharing financial costs in these circumstances and other sources of funding.

#### **2. Guidance regarding Family Cars**

Financial support towards changing a car to a larger vehicle in order to support the adoption of a sibling group will be considered where there are more than three children in a family (including birth children). Where a family is taking siblings and the prospective adopters have a family car and need to change this to a larger vehicle a financial means test will be required. A financial contribution of £3,000 is a guide to enable to family to purchase a larger vehicle in these circumstances subject to a financial assessment being undertaken.

#### **3. Washing/ironing/cleaning**

This will only be considered in exceptional circumstances to support the early months of a large sibling group of three or more moving in when extended family members are not available to support with these tasks. This is to enable the parent/s to focus on adapting to parenting larger sibling groups and to establish relationships with the children. This should be tapered over time so that these tasks can be taken on gradually.

### **Early Permanence Carers:**

All early permanence carers are paid an age based fostering allowance during the fostering phase of their placement by the child's local authority. When a child is placed with an EPP carer, arrangements in relation to settling in grants or assistance towards initial setting up costs will need to be discussed with the fostering service from the child's local authority who are responsible for this. The age based fostering allowance will cease when a child is placed formally for adoption following matching decision (the ADM ratification date of the match). Any ongoing adoption allowances for a child will be assessed based on the child's individual needs and the adopter's financial circumstances and will be subject to agreement by each individual local authority in light of the eligibility criteria discussed above. This should be completed before matching panel and set out in the adoption plan finance section.

### **Foster carers who adopt a child in their care**

The five west Yorkshire local authorities have agreed that where a child is eligible for financial support as determined here:

- a child is over 5 years of age OR
- sibling group: the 2nd and subsequent child/ren placed together will be considered eligible for financial support OR
- If the child is likely to wait longer for adoption and deemed "harder to place" due to ethnicity or religious needs or due to disability or complex physical/emotional problems and/or complex health issues.

In addition, if the child has not secured an adoption placement within an agreed timescale and adoption is the best outcome for the child with the existing foster carer the agreement is that the ongoing child based allowance and the equivalent of the foster carer's fee is payable until the end of August following a child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. In all these cases the financial assessment will be waived and adjustments for child benefit and the element of child tax credit will be made at source, therefore not duplicating state benefits.

For children who are not in the above categories the financial support will be for a maximum of two years following the child or children being placed for adoption at the equivalent rate of the child allowance and fee.

### **Financial Support following Adoption Order**

Following the making of an adoption order if an adopter is experiencing real financial hardship and considers that a child's welfare might be affected or put at risk then One Adoption West Yorkshire will carry out an assessment if requested, to determine whether support, including financial support is required to support the family under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. This will take into account the adopters circumstances and the needs of the child/ren and also taking into account the resources of the family to meet those needs. If there is real financial hardship that would put the children's welfare at risk, the Local Authority would ensure that the children's basic needs are met, whilst undertaking these assessments.

Requests for support need to be considered individually and subject to a financial assessment. There should be no duplications of welfare benefits available. There may be exceptional circumstances when

the means test will be waived due to the specific circumstances of the situation taking into account any hardship that may occur if the support is not provided. These decisions will be made in the LA by the resource panel/ permanence panel.

**Local authority contact details:**

For assistance with ongoing financial support, foster carer payments for EPP carers etc. please see below contact details for the individual Local Authorities that make up One Adoption West Yorkshire

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Email</b>
Leeds	Barbara Chapman	<a href="mailto:SSD_Child_Carer_Payments_Team@Leeds.gov.uk">SSD_Child_Carer_Payments_Team@Leeds.gov.uk</a>
Kirklees	Natasha Connolly	<a href="mailto:Natasha.Connolly@kirklees.gov.uk">Natasha.Connolly@kirklees.gov.uk</a>
Calderdale	Jean Billington	<a href="mailto:Jean.Billington@calderdale.gov.uk">Jean.Billington@calderdale.gov.uk</a>
Bradford	Susan Hall Angela Rothera	<a href="mailto:susan.hall@bradford.gov.uk">susan.hall@bradford.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:angela.rothera@bradford.gov.uk">angela.rothera@bradford.gov.uk</a>
Wakefield	Stephen Oldroyd	<a href="mailto:stephenoldroyd@wakefield.gov.uk">stephenoldroyd@wakefield.gov.uk</a>