

APPENDIX A



Adoption and Fostering

Central Bedfordshire Council
and Bedford Borough Council
working together

Policy on Adoption Financial Support

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Agreed by (e.g. council):	Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the Adoption Support Regulations 2005, one of the types of support that may be offered to adopters is financial support.
- 1.2 Local authorities have a legal power to provide support, including financial to individual adoptive families but no legal duty to do so.
- 1.3 The amount of the allowance paid is also discretionary; each local authority may pay allowances at a different rate, can change schemes and must alter them in response to new legislation. However, they must inform adopters of proposed changes and give them an opportunity to comment.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 In accordance with the Adoption Support Regulations 2005, the circumstances in which financial support may be paid to an adoptive parent are as follows:
 - a) where it is necessary to ensure that the adoptive parent can look after the child
 - b) where the child needs special care which requires greater expenditure of resources by reason of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties, or the continuing consequences of past abuse or neglect
 - c) where it is necessary for the local authority to make any special arrangements to facilitate the placement or the adoption by reason of:
 - a. the age or ethnic origin of the child, or
 - b. the desirability of the child being placed with the same adoptive parent as his brother or sister (whether of full or half-blood) or with a child with whom he has previously shared a home
 - d) where such support is to meet recurring costs in respect of travel for the purpose of visits between the child and a related person
 - e) where the local authority considers it appropriate to make a contribution to meet the following kinds of expenditure –
 - a. expenditure on legal costs, including fees payable to a court in relation to an adoption
 - b. expenditure for the purpose of introducing an adoptive child to his adoptive parent
 - c. expenditure necessary for the purpose of accommodating and maintaining the child, including the provision of furniture and domestic equipment, alterations to and adaptations of the home, provision of means of transport, and provision of clothing, toys and other items necessary for the purpose of looking after the child

- 2.2 Financial support (**Adoption Support Regulations 3.1.a**) can be used creatively in order to support the Adoptive Placement. Adoption Support Regulation 3.3 states that provision of services under (**Adoption Support Regulations 3.1. b to f**) may include the local authority giving a person assistance in cash where the authority considers this appropriate. For example giving an adoptive parent cash to pay a babysitter so that they can have a break for an evening or money for petrol where a contact visit has been arranged. Where cash is provided in this way it **should not** be means tested as it is being provided as part of a service rather than financial support.
- 2.3 Financial support ceases to be payable to an adoptive parent if:
- a) the child ceases to have a home with them or dies
 - b) the child ceases full-time education or training and commences employment
 - c) the child qualifies for Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance in his or her own right, or
 - d) the child attains the age of 18 unless he continues in full-time education or training, when it may continue until the end of the course or training he is then undertaking.
- 2.4 For Central Bedfordshire children placed for adoption, non means-tested payments may be made. This includes a £500 settling in grant for each child placed for adoption, unless the child is being adopted by their current foster carers. Introduction costs (e.g. mileage, accommodation, meals) should be agreed at the Matching Meeting by an Adoption Manager. The Social Worker should submit a request for these payments to an Adoption Manager. The adopter(s) will receive written notification and payments would be made within 28 days of receipt of their agreement.
- 2.5 In Central Bedfordshire, where foster carers seek to adopt a child they have been fostering and the council supports this plan, the carers will receive regular Adoption Financial Support at the rate equivalent to Central Bedfordshire's fostering allowance until the child is 18, minus any welfare benefits that become payable to the foster carer when the child's placement becomes an adoptive placement under Adoption Agencies Regulations.
- 2.6 One off lump sum payments will be considered where there is a specific need. Where a child has disabilities the first step must be to try and secure Disability Facilities Grant (DFG) funding. If this is not agreed or there is a shortfall, the local authority will assess needs and may provide financial assistance.
- 2.7 If the lump sum is to facilitate a sibling placement, the Local Authority will assess using the means test and decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

3. *Who can receive financial support?*

- 3.1 The DFES Standard Means Test will be used in all cases where financial support is requested. This will assist in determining if and when to pay financial support and how much to pay.
- 3.2 There is a legal obligation for adopters and prospective adopters to provide the local authority with full details of their finances when they are being assessed for their need for financial support and at the annual review of financial support. (Adoption Support Regulations 12 & 20).

4. *Decisions relating to payment*

- 4.1 Payments can be made as a one-off lump sum, a series of lump sums, or as weekly or monthly allowances and can include the cost of the following:
- Travel for introductory meetings between the child and adopter(s)
 - Domestic equipment, alterations and adaptations to the home (which would not be covered by the Disabled Facilities Grant)
 - Special diets, clothing or bedding, nursery attendance etc, to meet a child's additional needs
 - Damage to the home arising from additional behavioural difficulties
 - Legal fees to achieve the Adoption Order (provided the local authority supports the Adoption Order Application)
 - Travel and other expenditure for contact visits for the child(ren).
- 4.2 The decision to provide financial support rests solely with the Council. Although there is a legal power to provide support and financial support to adopters, there is no legal duty to do so.

5. *Arrangements across local authority areas*

- 5.1 Where financial support has been agreed by a placing authority, they will be responsible for the financial support no matter where the child lives.
- 5.2 Responsibility continues to rest with the placing local authority, for assessing the need for all forms of support arising for the first time after the Adoption Order is granted, including financial, for three years from the date the Adoption Order was granted. Thereafter responsibility for assessing all support needs and their provision rests with the local authority in whose area the family lives.

6. Outcomes of this policy

- 6.1 Children who are placed for adoption and their adoptive families are given the support needed to ensure that the child has a permanent, stable and loving family who can provide for their physical, emotional and developmental needs.
- 6.2 Disruptions will be minimised through the support given to maintain a caring environment for the family.

7. Legislation

- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Adoption Support Regulations 2005
- National Minimum Standards Adoption 2003
- Practice Guidance on assessing the support needs of adoptive families 2004
- Assessment framework for Children in Need and their Families.