

Child Safety PROCEDURE

Title: Expenses - Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments

Procedure No.: 365-17

Purpose

This procedure guides the provision of the Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments to carers.

Process

The Fortnightly caring allowance is paid fortnightly at specified rates for children aged 0-5, 6-10 and 11+. The current payment rates are available in the Fortnightly caring allowance rates schedule available on Child Safety's Infonet:

<https://csywintranet.root.internal/service-delivery/child-safety/foster-kinship-care/payment-cycle>

Payments may be made to approved foster and kinship carers, provisionally approved carers, long-term guardians, and permanent guardians, as provided in the associated policy. The term "carer" will be used inclusive of all eligible recipients in this procedure unless otherwise noted.

1. Calculate minimum payments

All care arrangements of 1 night's duration (that is, care arrangements not exceeding 24 hours) are to be paid at a rate of 2 days equivalent Fortnightly caring allowance.

All care arrangements 2 nights and over are paid at the actual daily rate. The final day of the care arrangement is to be paid in full regardless of what time the child leaves the placement, for example:

- care arrangement commences 9am, 1 Sept and ends 5pm, 2 Sept = 2 days allowance
- care arrangement commences 9am, 1 Sept and ends 3am, 3 Sept = 3 days allowance
- care arrangement commences 9am, 1 Sept and ends 11pm, 3 Sept = 3 days allowance
- care arrangement commences 9am, 1 Sept and ends 1am, 4 Sept = 4 days allowance

The same arrangement will apply to dual respite care arrangements.

In exceptional circumstances, a care arrangement may be for one day only with no overnight stay, or a care arrangement may break down immediately, that is before midnight of the first day of the care arrangement. In such circumstances, carers will be paid at a rate of 1 full day by entering the same care arrangement start date and end date in ICMS.

2. Complete actions in ICMS and Carepay to facilitate payment

The Fortnightly caring allowance is paid fortnightly in arrears and cannot be paid in advance. However, if the care arrangement commenced prior to the current payment fortnight, a payment is produced immediately to bring the carer's payments up to date with the previous fortnightly payment period. The payment fortnight commences on Sunday to the second following Saturday inclusive.

To commence payment of the Fortnightly caring allowance:

- enter the care arrangement start date, and proposed end date, if known, in ICMS which will trigger a task in Carepay (respite care arrangements must have an end date)
- in Carepay, identify if the Start-up Allowance is to be paid by completing the Start-up allowance grid in the Payment management screen of the carer profile or child profile
- submit the task for approval.

Regular fortnightly payments are made to the carer until the care arrangement is end dated in ICMS and the subsequent task in Carepay is actioned.

All carers will receive a Remittance Advice from QSS detailing the payments made to them each fortnight. The Remittance Advices are mailed on the Tuesday following the pay-run.

The carer will usually receive their Fortnightly caring allowance payment on the following Wednesday or Thursday. This arrangement may vary over the Christmas/New Year period and public holidays.

Commencing payments older than 12 months

All efforts will be made to commence the Fortnightly caring allowance in a timely manner. Regional Director approval is required for payments where:

- an approved carer has not had Fortnightly caring allowance payments commenced for a care arrangement where the start date is more than 12 months old and
- the care arrangement was for greater than 90 days or ongoing.

To commence payments:

- record the care arrangement dates in the care arrangement event which will trigger a task in Carepay
- attach the memo with Regional Director approval to the placement event
- submit the Carepay task for approval.

Final day of care arrangement

The Fortnightly caring allowance ceases from the day the child leaves the care arrangement or the direct care of the guardian in circumstances where it is not planned that the child will return to the carer or guardian. This is known as the final day of care arrangement.

The Fortnightly caring allowance for the final day of care arrangement is paid in full at the current rate regardless of what time the child leaves the care arrangement or the guardianship care arrangement on that day. This arrangement acknowledges that carers incur costs up to and including the last day that the child is placed with them, or in their guardianship.

If a child is moving to another care arrangement, the new carer will receive a full day's Fortnightly caring allowance for the first day the child is placed with them. This situation results in both the former

and the new carer simultaneously receiving the Fortnightly caring allowance for the same child for that one day.

If the change of care arrangement has not been initiated by the carer, the Child Safety officer informs the carer of the following:

- the decision that there is to be a change in care arrangement
- the date the Fortnightly caring allowance payment will cease.

If Child Safety is advised, or becomes aware, that the child is no longer in the direct care of the long-term guardian or permanent care guardian, the Child Safety officer will also inform the guardian of the date the Fortnightly caring allowance will cease.

3. Carer Allowance – Establishment Allowance

The establishment allowance is provided the first time a child or young person is:

- subject to a Child Protection Order granting custody or guardianship to the Chief Executive under the *Child Protection Act 1999*
- entering guardianship under the *Adoption Act 2009*.

The establishment allowance is a one-off payment made to a carer for a child or young person when they come into care for the first time. However, this payment can also be used where a child or young person returns into the care of the Chief Executive after an unsuccessful reunification and where the original order has expired.

The payment is to be used for items that will assist the carer establish the care arrangement. It is envisaged that the establishment allowance will be provided when the care arrangement is confirmed and is for a period of longer than 7 days.

A child or young person subject to a Temporary Assessment Order (TAO), Court Assessment Order (CAO) or Temporary Custody Order (TCO) is not eligible for this payment. If however, the child on the TAO, CAO or TCO is subsequently placed on an order, the establishment allowance is to be provided as soon as practicable once a care arrangement is confirmed for longer than 7 days.

This allowance is not conditional on a case plan and receipts are not required, but it should be noted in the case plan that the payment has been made.

If a sibling group or multiple children or young people are simultaneously placed with the same carer for the first time, and all are subject to the custody or guardianship of the Chief Executive, each child or young person is eligible for this payment.

This payment is processed through Carepay by completing the Establishment payment grid in the details screen of the child profile in Carepay. A Client Related Costs (CRC) form is not required to be completed for the application of this allowance.

As a general rule, items purchased for the child or young person with the establishment allowance remain the property of the child or young person when changing care arrangements or returning home and should therefore go with the child.

4. Carer Allowance – Start-Up Allowance

The start-up allowance is provided to carers in receipt of the fortnightly caring allowance.

The purpose of this allowance is to provide financial support to carers for initial set up costs to establish appropriate accommodation and resources for a new care arrangement greater than five night's duration.

At the discretion of the CSSC manager, the start-up allowance can be provided for a care arrangement less than five nights in duration depending on child or young person's needs and the individual circumstances of the carer.

This allowance is not paid in relation to dual care arrangements, that is, for dual care arrangements greater than five nights only the carer who provides respite and support receives the start-up allowance.

This allowance is paid through Carepay by completing the Start-up allowance grid in the Payment management screen of the carer profile or child profile in Carepay. A CRC form is not required to be completed for the application of this allowance.

Receipts are not required to substantiate expenses covered by this allowance.

5. Respond to absences from a care arrangement or long-term or permanent guardianship arrangement

In recognition that carer's or guardian's experience continuing costs associated with the care of a child when the child is absent from a care arrangement or a long-term or permanent guardianship care arrangement for short periods of time, Child Safety will continue to pay the Fortnightly caring allowance when the child is:

- away from a care arrangement or their long-term or permanent guardian for a period of up to 28 days in an arrangement not subject to the Fortnightly caring allowance (for example, family contact, holidays away, hospitalisation, incarceration, school excursion, work experience, running away) and it is planned that the child will return to the care arrangement or their long-term guardian (excluding boarding school as this is not regarded as a short period of time away from the care arrangement)
- hospitalised and returning to the care arrangement or the long-term guardian following their release from hospital (regardless of the length of stay in hospital) and the carer or long-term guardian maintains planned, regular and ongoing contact with the child
- subject to a short-term detention order and returning to the care arrangement or their long-term guardian following their release from detention and the carer or the long-term guardian maintains planned, regular and ongoing contact with the child.

To continue payment:

- ensure the child's care arrangement remains open in ICMS so that a task to cease payment is not triggered in Carepay
- record the child's location, for the period of their absence, in the child's location tab in ICMS.

Discontinue the Fortnightly caring allowance

Except for circumstances involving a child's hospitalisation or a short-term detention order (as outlined above), where the child is away from their care arrangement but will eventually return to the care arrangement or their long-term guardian, the Fortnightly caring allowance will be stopped after 28 days.

The exception to this is where a child resides at boarding school. When a child attends boarding school, payment of Fortnightly caring allowance will cease on the day the child returns to boarding school.

For children subject to a long-term guardianship order or permanent care order, payments of Fortnightly caring allowance will cease when the guardian gives the chief executive written notice that the child is no longer in their care.

To discontinue payment, end date the child's care arrangement in ICMS.

Recommence the Fortnightly caring allowance after a discontinuation

The Fortnightly caring allowance is re-commenced where:

- the child returns to the care arrangement or long-term guardian following an absence of more than 28 days
- a child who resides at a boarding school returns to their care arrangement or long-term guardian for school holidays or other periods of time throughout the year (for example, weekends).

To recommence payment after a discontinuation, enter the new care arrangement start date in ICMS.

If the carer is returning after a period of being inactive check the carer's vendor account in SAP to see if it is not blocked. If the vendor account is blocked, submit a Vendor eForm Change to request Unblock. Before submitting the Vendor eForm to unblock, check that all the details in SAP vendor account of the carer are correct, and current, especially bank account details.

The Start-up allowance may also be provided, at the discretion of the Child Safety Service Centre manager, in situations where the Fortnightly caring allowance has been stopped and a child is returning to a care arrangement or their long-term guardian for a period longer than a five night duration.

Examples may include situations where:

- the child returns with few belongings after an unsuccessful reunification plan or transition to independent living
- the carer has accepted a new care arrangement during the child's absence and the unplanned care arrangement recommencement incurs significant unplanned expenses
- the child has undergone a medical procedure during their absence and the carer or the long-term guardian will incur significant expenses (upon care arrangement recommencement) that were not planned or foreseeable by the carer or long-term guardian
- the child has been absent for an extended period of time and presents with a new range of needs constituting significant expenses i.e. a baby may return as an infant and will require a new car seat, bedding, clothing etcetera.

Note: Significant expenses are child related expenses in excess of \$400.

To pay the Start-up allowance, complete the Start-up allowance grid in the Payment management screen of the carer profile or child profile in Carepay. Receipts are not required to substantiate expenses covered by this allowance.

6. Respond to overpayments

It is the responsibility of Child Safety Service Centre officers to promptly and accurately complete actions in ICMS and Carepay to ensure that payments are not continued beyond the expiry of the approved period (this includes monitoring all provisionally approved carers), or beyond the date the child is no longer residing in the direct care of the long-term guardian.

If an overpayment occurs, the carer or guardian must be advised as soon as possible and negotiations undertaken to agree on a suitable repayment strategy. There are three methods for repayment. The carer or long-term guardian can either:

- forward a cheque for the entire amount
- make a number of smaller payments over a specified period of time
- agree to a repayment plan and the specified amount will be deducted from future carer payments, if applicable. Note: this option is only available to carers with current care arrangements. If, prior to the overpayment being repaid, the carer has no care arrangements, one of the other options above must be agreed to by the carer.

Please refer to the [Financial Management Practice Manual](#) on the management of carer debt.

There are two pro-forma letters that will be used in all debt recovery action with carers, including long-term guardians:

- Carer overpayment Letter – First form (an initial request for reimbursement)
- Carer overpayment Letter – Second form (a follow-up letter)

Staff will also be required to produce and attach the Overpayment Advice form containing details of the overpayment to the Carer overpayment letter.

The letters and form can be accessed via the [Financial Management Practice Manual](#).

Note: Carers and guardians will not always be aware that an overpayment has taken place, especially if they are caring for several children. Accordingly, any correspondence or contact made by Child Safety officers to a carer or guardian seeking repayment must be respectful and on official letterhead.

A monthly *Unrecovered overpayments report* created through Carepay can be run to provide the Child Safety Service Centre manager with details to assist with the management of carer overpayments.

Write-off an overpayment, if applicable

The decision to “write-off” a carer/long-term guardian/permanent guardian overpayment will only be actioned as a last resort after all other options have been unsuccessful. All write-offs (losses) are included in the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services Financial Statements for the end of financial year reporting.

Debts may be written off in accordance with the Financial Management Practice Manual.

7. Administer inter-state foster payments

It is preferable for case management purposes that if a child transfers or moves inter-state, case responsibility also be transferred to that state or territory.

Where this cannot take place, an inter-state foster allowance will be paid to the carer and guardians for those children subject to a Queensland child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive of the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services. Permanent Guardians caring for a child subject to a Permanent Care Order who have advised the department that they have moved interstate will also be eligible to receive an inter-state foster allowance.

Where another state or territory pay a higher rate of fostering allowance, the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services will match that state or territory's rate, however if a state or territory's allowance is less than that of Queensland, the carer or guardian will remain on the Queensland rate.

To process an inter-state foster payment, complete the Interstate Fortnightly caring allowance grid in the Carer profile in Carepay.

Inter-state foster allowance is automatically charged to account code – 54490 - Interstate Foster Allowance through Carepay.

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Help Contact: Tertiary Care and Support

Links

- Policy 365-16 Expenses – Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments

Related Procedures:

- Care Allowance- Extended post care support (361-1)
- Child Related Costs Procedure – Carer support (645.5)
- Child Related Costs Procedure –Child and Young Person Support (645.4)
- Child Related Costs Procedure –Education and Child Care Support (645.2)
- Child Related Costs – Long-term guardian support (608)
- Child Related Costs Procedure –Health and Wellbeing (645.1)
- Child related costs – Placement funding (628)
- Child related costs – Placement support funding (629)
- Child Related Costs Procedure –Travel (645.3)
- Complex support needs allowance (612)
- Dual payment of carer allowances (289)
- High support needs allowance (296)
- Regional/remote loading for carers (379)
- Child Safety Practice Manual

Related Legislation or Standard:

- *Adoption Act 2009*
- *Child Protection Act 1999*
- Child Protection Regulation 2023
- *Financial Accountability Act 2009*
- *Human Rights Act 2019*

Related Government Guidelines or Policy

- Statement of Commitment Between the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs and the foster and kinship carers of Queensland

Forms, Standard Letters or Memorandum:

- Carer overpayment Letter 1
- Carer overpayment Letter 2

Rescinded Policy

- Policy 365-15 Expenses – Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments
- 379-6 Regional and remote loading for carers

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