

Parental Contributions

Guidance for Parents and Carers



**achieving
for children**

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This guidance explains the financial assessment process and financial contributions that the local authority and Achieving for Children expects parents to make when their child is looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

1. Why are we asking you to contribute?

The term 'looked after' refers to children who are subject to Care Orders and those who are accommodated voluntarily by the local authority. You remain responsible for your child even when he or she is being looked after, voluntarily or under a Care Order, by the local authority and Achieving for Children.

2. Will I be asked to contribute?

If you are the natural or adoptive parent(s), you will usually be expected to contribute to the cost of your child's care and accommodation. Where parents are separated or divorced, both parents are expected to contribute to the costs of their child's care; however, your finances will be assessed separately. If a natural parent is married to or living with another person, only the income of the natural parent will be used in the assessment.

In some cases, parents will not be asked for a contribution. This includes when:

- Children are accommodated in an emergency or short-term basis for less than seven nights;
- Children are subject to an Interim Care Order, Care Order, or Emergency Protection Order;
- children who are subject to care proceedings and accommodated under Section 20 under the No Order Principle;
- Children are aged 16 years of age or over; or
- Parents are in receipt of Universal Credit or income-related employment and support allowance, Income Support, any element of Child Tax Credit other than the family element, Working Tax Credit, or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.

3. What information do we need from you?

In order for us to work out how much you will be charged, we will ask you to fill in a simple financial assessment form. This asks for basic information about your income and benefits. We will also ask you to provide evidence of your income and any benefits that you receive. This will include one of the following:

- Three pay slips if you are paid monthly; or eight payslips if you are paid weekly; or

- A copy of your certified statement of accounts or tax self-assessment form if you are self-employed; or
- A copy of your current benefit award letters to confirm which benefits you are receiving.

If you are living apart from your child's other parent you should make this clear on the financial assessment form you send us so we can send them a separate form to complete. We will not take into account the income of any partner or relative who does not have parental responsibility for the child.

If you would like help completing the financial assessment form please ask your child's social worker.

4. How is the parental contribution worked out?

We will use your completed financial assessment form and the proof of income you provide to work out what financial contribution you will be asked to make. Your income includes your earnings, money from an occupational or personal pension and certain benefits. The details of the formula we use to work out how much you will be expected to contribute can be provided to you on request.

You will not be expected to contribute more than the cost of a foster care placement. These are available on our website at www.achievingforchildren.org.uk.

5. Notification of contribution

Once we have worked out the financial contribution you will be asked to make, we will send you a Contribution Notice which will tell you the amount you are being asked to contribute and the arrangements for making the payments.

If you have told us you are receiving benefits we will write and tell you that you do not have to contribute once we have seen proof and verified your benefits.

6. Will there be regular reviews?

The amount you are asked to contribute can change as your circumstances change. You should notify your child's social worker of changes to your financial circumstances. We will usually check the financial details with you each year and will review the amount you are asked to contribute.

7. What if I don't return the financial assessment form?

If you choose not to complete the financial assessment form we will automatically ask you to contribute the maximum charge which will be the full cost of a foster care placement.

8. What if I don't pay?

Achieving for Children will pursue all outstanding debts. If you do not pay, you may be taken to court or we may use a debt collection agency where you may also be liable for any administrative payments incurred.

9. Notification of change of address

You must notify your child's social worker of any change of address.

10. Reviews and Appeals

We have based the parental contribution formula on what we believe is fair and realistic; however, if you feel that payment of the assessed contribution would result in financial hardship, you may request that we review your contribution. If you are still not satisfied you can appeal against our decision.

There are three levels of review and appeal:

- Level 1: review of contribution
- Level 2: initial appeal
- Level 3: final appeal

Level 1: review of contribution

If you feel we have not considered all your circumstances, or that we have incorrectly calculated your contribution, you can ask us to review. You should request a review of the financial contribution by writing to the relevant Associate Director explaining why you cannot afford to make the payment and giving any additional information you would like us to take into account when reviewing the contribution. Details of the relevant Associate Director are available from your social worker.

Level 2: initial appeal

If we have reviewed your contribution and you disagree with our decision, you can appeal against it. You must do this within one month of getting a letter from us telling you about the reviewed decision. You should write to the relevant Associate Director to appeal the decision of the review. You should explain why you are not satisfied with the Level 1 review. The Associate Director will consider your initial appeal and notify you of the outcome within 14 working days of receiving your request.

Level 3: final appeal

If you do not accept the outcome of the initial appeal, you should write to the Director of Children's Social Care at Achieving for Children explaining that you would like to appeal

against the Level 2 initial appeal decision. This will then be considered and you will be notified of the outcome within 14 working days of receiving your request.

11. Any further questions

If you have any questions about the parental contributions for children looked after by the local authority and Achieving for Children, please ask your social worker or contact:

Achieving for Children
Guildhall 2, High Street, Kingston KT1 1EU

If you are trying to contact one of our services and do not have a direct number, please phone the Contact Centre for
Kingston Council on 020 8547 5000 or
Richmond Council on 020 8891 1411 or
Windsor and Maidenhead on 01628 683800 or

Contact us via a contact form on our website:
<http://www.achievingforchildren.org.uk/contact-us/>