Child Safety

PROCEDURE

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

Procedure No: 365-12

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

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

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

The same arrangement will apply to dual respite placements.

In exceptional circumstances, a placement may be for one day only with no overnight stay, or a placement may break down immediately, that is before midnight of the first day of the placement. In such circumstances, carers will be paid at a rate of 1 full day by entering the same placement 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 placement 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 placement start date, and proposed end date, if known, in ICMS which will trigger a task in Carepay (respite placements must have an end date)
- in Carepay, identify if the Start-up/Outfitting 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 placement is end dated in ICMS and the subsequent task in Carepay in actioned.

All carers will receive a Remittance Advice from QSS detailing the payments made to them each fortnight. The Remittance Advises 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 placement where the start date is more than 12 months old and
- the placement was for greater than 90 days or ongoing.

To commence payments:
- record the placement dates in a placement 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 placement**

The Fortnightly caring allowance ceases from the day the child leaves the placement 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 placement.

The Fortnightly caring allowance for the final day of placement is paid in full at the current rate regardless of what time the child leaves the placement 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 placement, 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 placement 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 placement
• 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. Continue payment for care experienced young person after 18

The Child Safety Service Centre manager will approve payment of the Fortnightly caring allowance beyond a young person’s 18th birthday where the young person continues to reside with and be cared for by their approved carer or guardian, and:
• the care arrangement enables the young person to complete high school or equivalent, and
• the young person is receiving ongoing support through a support service case.

The Child Safety Service Centre manager may approve payment of the Fortnightly caring allowance beyond a young person’s 18th birthday in other circumstances, giving consideration to:
• the young person’s developmental, social and emotional readiness to live independently, particularly where they have complex or additional needs
• the stability and security of the young person’s proposed housing, education and employment arrangements after turning 18
• the support and assistance, both formal and informal, available to the young person as they transition to adulthood
• the ongoing supports extended by Child Safety through a support service case.

To commence payment, following approval by the CSSC manager:
• record the placement in a placement event in ICMS which will trigger a task in Carepay
• in Carepay, complete the ‘Continue to pay FCA payment beyond 18 years old’ grid in the Details screen of the child profile and submit the task for approval.

The payment details in Carepay must have a start and end date. The end date will generally be six months after the start date, in line with the young person’s Support plan review which is to occur following six months of ongoing intervention.

Where a senior team leader, rather than the service centre manager, is approving the payment in Carepay, ensure adequate documentation is attached to the placement event outlining that payment is approved by the service centre manager.

4. Respond to absences from a placement or long-term or permanent guardianship arrangement Continue the Fortnightly caring allowance during short absences

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 placement 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 placement 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 placement or their long-term guardian (excluding
boarding school as this is not regarded as a short period of time away from the placement)

- hospitalised and returning to the placement 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 placement 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 placement 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 placement but will eventually return to the placement 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 placement in ICMS.

**Recommence the Fortnightly caring allowance after a discontinuation**

The Fortnightly caring allowance is re-commenced where:

- the child returns to the placement or long-term guardian following an absence of more than 28 days
- a child who resides at a boarding school returns to their placement 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 placement start date in ICMS.

The Start-up/outfitting 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 placement 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 placement during the child’s absence and the unplanned placement 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 placement 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/outfitting 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.

5. 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 placements. If, prior to the overpayment being repaid, the carer has no placements, one of the other options above must be agreed to by the carer.

Please refer to the following departmental procedure on the management of carer debt: [Carer debt policy and procedure](http://intranet.root.internal/comintranet/forms-templates/finance-and-procurement/gss-and-internal-finance-forms/internal-forms) (DOCX, 330 KB)

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 following link under Debt Management: [http://intranet.root.internal/comintranet/forms-templates/finance-and-procurement/gss-and-internal-finance-forms/internal-forms](http://intranet.root.internal/comintranet/forms-templates/finance-and-procurement/gss-and-internal-finance-forms/internal-forms)

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, Youth and Women Financial Statements for the end of financial year reporting.

Debts may be written off in accordance with the debt management procedure and the financial delegations schedule accessed via the following link: https://csywintranet.root.internal/policies-procedures/finance-procurement/financial-management-practice-manual-fmpm/financial-governance

6. 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, Youth and Women.-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.

The allowance is paid at rates equivalent to that state or territory.

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.
Records File No.: CHS/16389  
Date of approval: 21 January 2019  
Date of operation: 21 January 2019  
Date to be reviewed: 21 January 2022  
Office: Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women  
Help Contact: Operational Support  

Links

- Policy 365-12 Expenses – Fortnightly caring allowance and inter-state foster payments

<Related Procedures>

Related Procedures:
- Child Related Costs – Carer support (597)
- Child Related Costs – Client support and family contact (598) Child Related Costs – Education support (599)
- Child Related Costs – Long-term guardian support (608)
- Child Related Costs – Medical (596)
- Child Related Costs – Outfitting (600)
- Child related costs – Placement funding (628)
- Child related costs – Placement support funding (629)
- Child Related Costs – Travel (595)
- Complex support needs allowance (612)
- Dual payment of carer allowances (289)
- High support needs allowance (296)
- Regional/remote loading for carers (379)  

Related Legislation or Standard:
- Adoption Act 2009
- Child Protection Act 1999
- Child Protection Regulation 2011
- Financial Accountability Act 2009

Related Government Guidelines or Policy:
- Child Safety Practice Manual
- Statement of Commitment Between the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability
Services and the foster and kinship carers of Queensland

**Forms, Standard Letters or Memorandum:**
- Carer overpayment Letter 1
- Carer overpayment Letter 2

Michael Hogan

Director-General