Title: High support needs allowance

Purpose

To inform staff about the eligibility criteria and procedures for administering the high support needs allowance policy.

This procedure gives effect to policy 296 High support needs allowance.

Process

1. Eligibility for the high support needs allowance

The high support needs allowance may be provided to approved foster and kinship carers or provisionally approved carers of children who:

- have been assessed as having high support needs (determined in accordance with the guidelines for assessing support needs in the Child Safety Practice Manual) that consistently result in costs exceeding the fortnightly caring allowance and
- are subject to an assessment or child protection care agreement; an assessment order; a temporary custody order; a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the Chief Executive; a transition order; or an adoption care agreement or adoption consent or dispensation of consent.

Long-term guardians and permanent guardians are eligible for high support needs allowance if they were an approved foster or kinship carer and caring for the child when the order was made; and either:

- the child is assessed and approved for high support needs allowance (whether of a short-term or enduring nature) prior to the making of the long-term guardianship order or permanent care order
- the child has developed or presents with emerging special needs (whether short-term or enduring in nature) that were unknown or not present at the time the long-term guardianship order or permanent care order was made.

In addition, permanent guardians may only be provided the high support needs allowance in exceptional circumstances for a time limited period (not exceeding six months) for the purpose of helping the guardian to establish a care environment to meet the child’s needs for the remainder of the order or where the child has emerging special needs and the allowance is required to promote stability of the care arrangement.

Eligibility for the high support needs allowance is not affected by any Commonwealth or state payments or benefits.
2. **Scope of the allowance**

The high support needs allowance is a fortnightly supplement to the fortnightly caring allowance, provided to assist with the direct care and placement costs of children with high support needs that consistently result in costs that exceed the fortnightly caring allowance.

At a minimum, it is expected that the high support needs allowance will cover the following types of expenditure:

- additional/ specialised food requirements
- baby-sitting and cleaning costs
- additional wear and tear on white goods (for example, washing machine)
- additional utilities costs
- additional clothing and household items (for example, washing detergent, bedding)
- additional safety equipment (for example, child locks and barriers)
- nappies for children with urinary or faecal incontinence (i.e. enuresis or encopresis)
- additional costs/fees associated with an identified strength, such as a sporting activity or other area of excellence, including additional camp fees
- additional costs associated with activities to support cultural identity
- subscription or membership fees for organisations and services related to the identified child strength or need (for example, membership of Autism Queensland).

The high support needs allowance does not cover additional mileage or travel costs; ongoing medical expenses; or costs associated with transition from care, as these items can be claimed through child related costs.

Provision of the high support needs allowance does not preclude the recipient from receiving reimbursement for specific child related costs. Decisions regarding the provision of child related costs will be based on the most effective means of supporting the child with the most efficient use of departmental resources, including consideration of how the high support needs allowance may improve placement stability and thereby reduce the risk of placement disruption and escalated placement costs.

Where a child is in receipt of a wage, or Commonwealth or state benefit, he or she is not expected to contribute to the cost of their care.

The high support needs allowance is not subject to tax and is not to be cited as income for any purpose, including yearly tax returns, applications for Commonwealth benefits, or when applying for loans from financial institutions.

3. **Apply for the high support needs allowance**

**Application by a child safety officer**

Where the child safety officer (CSO) is applying to the Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) manager for approval, the CSO will complete the [CSO application for high support needs allowance](#).

A placement meeting will be convened to discuss all support options for the child, including the
provision of high support needs allowance and/or child related costs. The outcome of the meeting, including any decision regarding the high support needs allowance will be recorded in the case plan and placement agreement.

Gathering evidence (for example, a specialist disability assessment report, school reports or assessments, medical reports and/or other professionals reports) to support the assessment and recommendation for high support needs allowance is required for the application process. A child with a significant medical condition, disability or developmental delay must have the condition verified through consultation with their professional, specialist or practitioner.

If a permanent guardian requests a review of their child’s case plan, and is requesting additional financial support, the child safety officer, senior team leader or senior practitioner will arrange a meeting to discuss the guardians request and to make an assessment of the child’s current support needs and the support options available for the child. Permanent guardians can receive high support needs allowance in exceptional circumstances for a child subject to a permanent care order, for a time limited period that does not exceed a six months.

The child safety officer, senior team leader or senior practitioner is responsible for completing the high support needs allowance application form for a child subject to a permanent care order. The process of assessing the provision of high support needs allowance for a guardian is the same as for a foster or kinship carer.

**Application by a carer or long-term guardian**

Carers and long-term guardians may request provision of the high support needs allowance by completing, or requesting the child safety officer to complete the [Carer/Long-term Guardian Application for High Support Needs Allowance](#). The CSO will complete the CSO application for high support needs allowance, attach it to the carer or long-term guardian’s application, and submit both for approval by the CSSC manager.

If a long-term guardian requests provision of the high support needs allowance, the guardian is responsible for submitting the completed Carer/Long-term Guardian Application for high support needs allowance. A placement meeting is not required however discussions will be undertaken with the long-term guardian to explore all support options for the child. The outcomes of discussions with the long-term guardian will be recorded as a case note in the child’s file. The long-term guardian is responsible for providing supporting information in relation to the child’s needs, for example, a specialist disability assessment report, school reports or assessments, medical reports and/or other professional’s reports. Child Safety will verify a significant medical condition, disability or developmental delay through consultation with the child’s professional, specialist or practitioner.

4. **Assessment for the allowance**

For a child in out-of-home care, the provision of the high support needs allowance will be determined by the outcome of the Child Strengths and Needs Assessment. The high support needs allowance will be provided for a child with an identified strength or need highlighted in the table below. Refer to the Child Safety Practice Manual for further detail on using this Structured Decision Making tool.

For long-term guardians, and permanent guardians conducting a Child Strengths and Needs Assessment is not required, however high support needs must be demonstrated by some other evidence, such as medical reports and/or specialist assessments.
Consideration will also be given to:

- the cumulative effect of the child’s identified strengths and/or needs on the child’s functioning and the implications for the carer’s costs
- how the allowance can be utilised to respond to the identified strengths and/or needs, and contribute to the stability of the placement or long-term guardianship care arrangement
- the requirements and needs identified as part of the child’s Child Health Passport, Education Support Plan, and specialist disability assessments where applicable (children identified as having high support needs will be prioritised for Child Health Passports or Education Support Plans where they are not yet completed) and
- the placement responses required to meet the identified strengths and/or needs.

### Child Strengths and Needs Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Behaviour</td>
<td>High level of functioning</td>
<td>Occasional age-appropriate problems</td>
<td>Significant and/or frequent problems</td>
<td>Major problems severely impact functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Emotional Stability</td>
<td>Demonstrates coping skills or high resilience</td>
<td>Generally stable, occasional issues</td>
<td>Significant instability</td>
<td>Extreme emotional responses which limit functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Alcohol and Drug Use</td>
<td>Conscious decision to avoid use</td>
<td>No use, or minor experimentation with no significant impact</td>
<td>Substance use with some impact</td>
<td>Substance use with serious dysfunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Family of Origins</td>
<td>Nurturing relationships with some or all family members</td>
<td>Adequate relationships with some or all family members</td>
<td>Limited relationships with most family members</td>
<td>Significant problems/conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Social Relationships (non-family)</td>
<td>Well-developed social skills</td>
<td>Expected level of social skills</td>
<td>Poor social skills</td>
<td>Disconnected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cultural History</td>
<td>Identity is a source of strength</td>
<td>Some identity</td>
<td>Conflicted</td>
<td>Disconnected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Physical Health</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>No health issues</td>
<td>Some health issues impact functioning</td>
<td>Major health issues severely impact functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Child Development and Intellectual Ability</td>
<td>Above average intelligence/development</td>
<td>Age-appropriate intellectual functioning/development</td>
<td>Limited intellectual functioning/developmental delay</td>
<td>Severely limited intellectual functioning/development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Additional Identified Child Strength/Need</td>
<td>Exceptional strength</td>
<td>Good/adequate functioning</td>
<td>Some need</td>
<td>Significant need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Life Skills (for YP15+)</td>
<td>Advanced life skills</td>
<td>Age-appropriate life skills</td>
<td>Lacks some age-appropriate life skills</td>
<td>Significantly limited life skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Relationship with Carer Family</td>
<td>Nurturing relationships with some or all carer family members</td>
<td>Adequate relationships with some or all carer family members</td>
<td>Limited relationships with most carer family members</td>
<td>Significant problems/conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **Duration of the allowance**

The duration for which provision of the high support needs allowance is required will be determined by the type of strengths and needs for which the allowance is provided, and their expected longevity. For example, where a child has suffered an accident and requires additional medical and physical care for a limited time period, the end date will reflect medical advice regarding the course of treatment and expected period of recovery.

Where the high support needs allowance is provided for an identified strength (as shaded in the above table), it must be for a definite period of time. For example, where an outstanding academic or sporting ability involving state representation requires additional financial assistance to enable the child to participate. In this instance, the duration of the high support needs allowance will be the period of time in which the child is participating in a sporting or academic program.

The high support needs allowance may be approved for an indefinite period of time only where a child has an ongoing disability, or medical or psychological condition, as verified by a medical practitioner or specialist. For a child subject to a permanent care order, the manager can approve high support needs allowance for a maximum period of six months.

The outcome of the Child Strengths and Needs Assessment, or the needs selected based on the information or evidence provided by a long-term guardian, and other supporting information, will be recorded in either the **CSO application for High Support Needs Allowance** (for an application made by the child safety officer) or the Carer/Long-term Guardian Application for High support needs allowance (for an application made by the child’s carer or long-term guardian), for the CSSC manager’s approval. The report must include a rationale for the proposed timeframe for the provision of the high support needs allowance.

6. **Approval and review of the allowance**

**Approval**

Approval of the high support needs allowance will be in accordance with the relevant financial delegations and standards.

Payment of the high support needs allowance can only commence upon approval by the CSSC manager. The carer should be advised of and be in agreement with the provision of the high support needs allowance and the commencement date and end date, where applicable.

In exceptional circumstances, the high support needs allowance may be back-paid as determined by the CSSC manager to a maximum of six months prior to approval. Back-payments of the high support needs allowance exceeding six months must be approved by the regional director. Decisions to back-pay the high support needs allowance should be made with consideration of:

- the period of time that the identified strength/need (for which the high support needs allowance has been approved) has been evident
- other payments (such as child related costs) which have been provided to assist with the expenses associated with the identified strength(s) and/or need(s) over the same period of time
- the time at which the carer or long-term guardian requested consideration of payment of the high support needs allowance.

Approval of the high support needs allowance will be incorporated in the child’s case plan during the next scheduled six monthly case plan review, unless its provision ceases prior to the scheduled review.
Review

Where the high support needs allowance is approved for an indefinite period of time or a period greater than six months, the ongoing need for the allowance will be reviewed every six months, as part of the child’s regular case plan review. For a child in care this will occur through a full case plan review. For children subject to an order granting long-term guardianship to a suitable person, this will occur through regular six monthly contact with the guardian. Where a child is cared for by a long-term guardian or a permanent guardian, a review of the Child Strengths and Needs Assessment is not required, however the child’s strengths and needs will be considered on the basis of supporting information and evidence provided by the guardian.

Where the high support needs allowance is no longer required, the payment should be ceased immediately by amending the end date of the allowance in the high and complex support needs allowance grid in the Details screen of the Child profile in Carepay.

7. Administer the allowance

To commence payments of the high support needs allowance:

- ensure placement dates are entered into ICMS
- complete the CSO Application for High Support Needs Allowance form and attach the approved form to the placement event
- attach the Carer/Long-term Guardian Application for High Support Needs Allowance to the placement event, where relevant
- enter the start and end dates of payment into the high and complex Support Needs Allowance grid in the Details screen of the Child profile in Carepay
- submit the task for approval.

The commencement date for payment of the high support needs allowance will be the date of approval, unless back-dated payments have been approved. The end date will be the end of the period for which provision of the high support needs allowance has been approved. If the high support needs allowance has been approved for an indefinite period of time, the end date will be the expiry date of the child’s current order (including where children are subject to an order granting long-term guardianship to a suitable person).

To discontinue payment of the high support needs allowance, in Carepay edit the end date of the current high and complex support needs allowance grid entry to reflect the date HSNA is to cease.

The high support needs allowance is paid fortnightly in arrears and cannot be paid in advance.

When a child transitions from one placement to another, the high support needs allowance will be paid to the child’s new carer until the scheduled end date or next scheduled review.

Carers are not required to provide receipts demonstrating the expenditure of the allowance.

Long-term guardians in receipt of the high support needs allowance are required to advise the department if the child leaves their direct care.

Dual payments
When dual payments are made for respite placements, in accordance with policy 289 Dual payment of carer allowances, both the primary carer and respite carer will receive the high support needs allowance, on a *pro rata* basis, for the period of time that the child is in the respite placement.

**Complex Support Needs Allowance**

Where the complex support needs allowance has been approved for a child, in accordance with policy 612 and procedure Complex support needs allowance, application and approval of the high support needs allowance is not required. Where a carer is in receipt of the complex support needs allowance, the high support needs allowance will automatically be paid.
Records File No.: ADM/05301
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Date of operation: 14 November 2016
Date to be reviewed: 6 May 2019 (Minor update 18 October 2018)

Office: Department of Child Safety Youth and Women
Help Contact: Operational Support

Links
296-7 High support needs allowance

Related Procedures
Case planning (263)
Case planning (263)
Complex Support Needs Allowance (612)
Complex Support Needs Allowance (procedure 612) 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 – Long-term guardian support (procedure 608) Child related costs – Medical (596)
Child related costs – Outfitting (600) Child related costs – Travel (595)
Dual payment of carer allowances (289)
Expenses – Fortnightly caring allowance and interstate foster payments (365) Regional/Remote loading for carers (379)
Supporting children in the care of long-term guardians (607)
Special payments (including Ex-gratia) (FSE009)
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
CSO application for High support needs allowance

Rescinded Procedures
296-6 High Support Needs Allowance

Michael Hogan
Director-General