



# Carer Payments (Family Based) Procedure

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## 1. Purpose

This procedure outlines the processes and business rules for carer payments made to approved family based carers (and carers with an approved temporary placement) for children and young people under appropriate legal authorities.

## 2. Scope

The procedure provides guidance for the Carer Payments team and DCP staff who are responsible for determining payment eligibility for out of home care (OOHC) family based placements.

This procedure covers all payments generated through C3MS to approved family based carers and carers with an approved temporary placement for children and young people under appropriate legal authorities.

This procedure does not cover the following payments:

- incidental expenses – contact DCP office business support team
- other DCP grants and funding (except the education grant and activity grant) – contact DCP office business support team
- other financial supports – contact DCP case worker
- non-family based care including, but not limited to, residential care, placement and support package (PaSP), emergency accommodation and supported independent living placement funding
- [Commonwealth payments](#)
- insurance, including damage to carers' goods and property or the property of others – contact DCP office business support team and Financial Systems and Compliance Unit
- Family Day Care placement funding.

## 3. Authority

### 3.1 Legislative context

- [Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017 \(CYPS Act\)](#)
- [Children and Young People \(Safety\) Regulations 2017](#)
- [Adoption Act 1988](#)

### 3.2 Whole of Government requirements

- [Australian Taxation Office \(ATO\) Taxation Determination TD2006/62](#)

### 3.3 DCP requirements

- [Debt Management Procedure](#)
- [Financial authorisations and delegations](#)
- [Manual of Practice](#)

### 3.4 Principles

- The safety of children and young people is the paramount consideration.
- Children and young people are valued citizens of the State and their views should be sought and considered when making decisions that affect them.
- DCP recognises that all children and young people in OOHC have experienced some level of trauma and this must always be considered in DCP's response to children and young people in care.

- DCP is culturally responsive to ensure compliance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, Section 12 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* and core elements for the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Case plans must include cultural plans (ACIST) which enable Aboriginal children to develop a healthy cultural identity and maintain connections and a sense of belonging to their family, community, Country and culture. For an Aboriginal child or young person to develop a healthy identity and maintain cultural links, financial payments connect to Aboriginal cultural plans to ensure children and young people have opportunities to grow strong in their cultural inheritance. An Aboriginal child or young person's participation to experience their culture and connections may require Aboriginal children and young people to travel interstate as well as attend sorry business and cultural events.
- DCP is culturally responsive to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and the needs and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities are included.
- DCP is culturally responsive to children, young people and their families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- DCP will be responsive to the needs of children and young people with disabilities.
- DCP is committed to comprehensive, early consultation with stakeholders, including children and young people, their families and carers.
- Carer payments are based on the identified individual care needs of each child or young person to equitably address complexity of individual need and access to appropriate supports.
- Carer payments are provided to support the provision of stable, nurturing, supportive, quality care and to ensure children and young people in OOH receive supports and opportunities in line with their peers in the general community.
- Family based carers will receive a carer payment towards the care costs of looking after children and young people placed with them by DCP under an appropriate legal authority.
- The Carer Payments team will maintain and provide consistent information, support and advice on carer payments to DCP offices and carers.

## 4. Procedure requirements

Carer payments include financial support provided for children and young people living with approved or temporary foster, kinship, specific child only (SCO), long-term guardianship (specified person) or financially assisted adoption carers. Carer payments can include carer subsidy payments, loadings, activity grant and education grants.

Carers cannot be paid by the Carer Payments team unless a carer is fully approved in C3MS by the Carer Approval and Review Unit (CARU) or a temporary placement has been approved in C3MS by a DCP office manager or supervisor.

The Carer Payments team is responsible for changing a carer's address, email address or bank details in C3MS. To change carer details, the DCP case worker must complete the relevant carer advice form via email, post or IApply for address changes

- [Carer advice - change of address](#)
- [Carer advice - bank account details.](#)

The DCP case worker is responsible for advising the Carer Payments team of any subsidy related payment details (including essential cards, local order, EFT etc) they have paid to carers at the time of placement commencement. A spreadsheet will be provided to the DCP case worker from Carer Payments requesting

payment details. This advice will ensure that, once the placement is recorded in C3MS, these payments are deducted from any back-payment to the carer.

Once the relevant form is received, the Carer Payments team is responsible for ensuring payments are made to carers in a timely manner in line with daily, weekly and fortnightly pay runs through C3MS.

Further information regarding Carer Payments is available at:

- [Carer Payments intranet page](#)
- [Carer Support Payments internet page](#)

The Carer Payments team can be contacted on:

- Phone: (08) 822 6666
- Email: [DCPCarerPayments@sa.gov.au](mailto:DCPCarerPayments@sa.gov.au)

## 4.1 Introduction

### 4.1.1 What is a carer payment?

A carer payment is a payment to fully approved or temporary carers to help cover the day-to-day, ordinary costs of caring for a child or young person in an OOHC placement. Carer payments are made for emergency, respite, short-term, long-term, temporary, post 18 and specialist placements.

Generally, carer payments are not taxed as they are not deemed 'income' for the carer and do not need to be listed in a carer's taxation return, applications for Commonwealth benefits or when applying for a loan from a financial institution. This is supported by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) [Taxation Determination TD2006/62](#) which specifies payments to a volunteer foster carer to provide foster care are not assessable income. The taxation information in this procedure is provided for general information only and should not be taken as constituting professional advice. Carers should consider seeking independent legal, financial, taxation or other advice to check how this general information relates to their individual circumstances.

### 4.1.2 How much is the carer payment?

Carer payment rates are different depending on a child or young person's age (except for specialist carers). The current rates are available on the DCP website via [Carer Payment Rates and Loadings](#).

The specialist carer payment rate is the same for all placements i.e. child or young person's age does not impact payment received. Please contact the Carer Payments team to obtain current specialist carer payment rates.

DCP acknowledges the costs faced by carers and endeavours to increase carer payments and loadings annually. This increase generally occurs from the 1st of July, subject to appropriate Department of Treasury and Finance and DCP approval.

Other payments such as the placement start-up payment, education grant and activity grant are reviewed from time to time to ensure appropriateness.

### 4.1.3 How is the carer payment paid?

A carer payment is paid by the Carer Payments team in arrears, directly into the carer's bank account. It is paid fortnightly for short-term, long-term, post 18, temporary and specialist placements, and weekly for respite, specialist respite and emergency placements. Carer Payments pay-run end day is **Wednesday**.

#### 4.1.4 Types of care

The different types of care that are eligible for carer payment are:

- General Foster Care
- Kinship Care
- Specific Child Only Care (SCO)
- Temporary Care
- Specialist Foster Care
- Long-Term Guardianship (Specified Person) (LTG)
- Financially Assisted Adoption.

Refer to Appendix 1 and the Manual of Practice [Determine the most suitable placement type available](#) and [General Family Based Care](#) and [Kinship care and placements](#) and [Specialist Family Based Care](#) and [Long Term Guardianship \(Specified Person\)](#) for more information.

#### 4.1.5 Who is eligible for carer payments?

Carer Payments can be made to fully approved or temporary carers including:

- general foster carers
- kinship carers
- SCO carers
- specialist foster carers
- LTG
- Financially assisted adoption parents
- carers of young people over 18 years old who are eligible for the Stability in Family-Based Care program or Over 18 Education Initiative.
- any carer where DCP has placed the child or young person and for whom the Chief Executive has assumed legal responsibility through either formal or voluntary orders and agreements as outlined in the Manual of Practice: [Consider the authority to place the child or young person](#).

Note: carers of children or young people who have been placed away from their parents as an outcome of a Family Group Conference are not eligible for carer payments, however, financial support may be negotiated through the DCP office.

## 4.2 Types of carer payments

### 4.2.1 Placement start-up payment

The placement start-up payment helps cover the initial or immediate costs of a child or young person being placed with a carer. This will generally include consumable items purchased by the carer in the first 24 hours of the placement such as food, clothing, footwear and basic personal items. The payment is usually made within 48 hours of the placement starting.

The placement start-up payment is paid to approved general foster, kinship, SCO and temporary carers who provide emergency, short-term long-term and temporary placements. Specialist foster carers and respite carers are not eligible for this payment.

The current placement start-up payment rate is available on the DCP website via [Carer Payment Rates and Loadings](#).

### 4.2.2 Basic subsidy

Basic subsidy is paid to temporary or approved general foster, kinship, SCO, LTG and financially assisted adoption carers to help cover the day-to-day, ordinary costs of caring for a child or young person in an OOHC placement, such as food, clothing, recreation, entertainment, basic medical costs, travel etc.

Carer reference [Who Pays for What?](#) document provides guidance of payment responsibilities and expectations.

Basic subsidy is paid fortnightly to carers of children or young people in short-term, long-term, temporary and post 18 placements, and paid weekly for respite and emergency placements.

Current basic subsidy rates are available on the DCP website via [Carer Payment Rates and Loadings](#).

### 4.2.3 Specialist subsidy

Specialist subsidy is paid to approved specialist foster carers to help cover the greater costs of caring for a child or young person in an OOHC placement with higher needs, such as food, clothing, recreation, entertainment, basic medical costs, travel etc.

Further guidance of payment responsibilities and expectations can be found on the DCP intranet page for [Specialist Family Based Care](#).

Specialist subsidy is paid fortnightly to carers of children or young people in specialist placements and paid weekly for specialist respite.

### 4.2.4 Remote allowance

Remote allowance is paid to carers who reside in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defined remote and very remote areas of South Australia. The payment compensates for the higher cost of living in these communities.

Remote allowance is an additional 10% of the basic subsidy payment and is paid for general short-term, long-term and temporary placements. Emergency, respite, post 18 and specialist placements are not eligible for the remote allowance.

### 4.2.5 Respite loadings

The carers of children or young people in a respite care placement are paid the basic subsidy rate for the age of the child or young person plus a 100% respite loading up to and including the first seven consecutive occasions of the placement.

The 100% respite loading is paid in recognition of the additional costs and responsibilities of caring for a child or young person for a short period of time. Further, respite carers are usually not provided with other financial support through incidental expenses or other DCP funding sources.

Specialist respite carers do not receive the loading as they are entitled to the specialist respite subsidy for the period of respite care up to 21 occasions. For further details please refer to Section 4.3.5 [Respite Placements](#) of this procedure.

### 4.2.6 Education grant

The education grant is paid at the beginning of each school term to help with the education costs of children or young people in care. This includes:

- preschool fees
- the component of primary/secondary school fees not covered by the [School Card](#)

- books and stationery
- uniforms and footwear
- excursions
- travel
- school photos
- education items such as educational books and toys for pre-school aged children.

### Eligibility

All approved and temporary general foster, kinship, SCO, LTG and financially assisted adoption carers are eligible to receive the education grant when the child or young person in their care is attending pre-school, primary or secondary school on a full-time basis. A child or young person placed under a Voluntary Custody Agreement (VCA) must be in OOHC for a minimum of three months before the carer can be paid the education grant.

Carers of children or young people below school age are eligible for the education grant to purchase early childhood education items such as books and educational toys.

The education grant is paid once per term in the last pay run before the term begins. If a child or young person moves placement shortly after the payment has been made for the term, the new carer will not receive an additional education grant for the same term unless it is appropriate to recover the payment from the previous carer via the raising of an overpayment.

Current education grant rates are available on the DCP website via [Carer Payment Rates and Loadings](#).

### Education Grant Annual Payment Schedule

The pay period dates for payment of the education grant will be recorded within C3MS 12 months in advance. The Carer Payments team leader will identify annually, in advance, the fortnightly pay run dates within each period of the [South Australian school holidays](#). Contact the Carer Payments team ([DCPCarerPayments@sa.gov.au](mailto:DCPCarerPayments@sa.gov.au)) for detailed education grant pay-run dates.

## 4.2.7 Activity grant

The activity grant is an annual payment paid to eligible family based carers to empower carers to support the child or young person in their care to participate in a cultural, recreational or social activity of the child or young person's choice. The activity grant has historically been utilised to attend the Royal Adelaide Show or a country show but this is not mandated.

### Eligibility

The activity grant will be paid to approved and temporary general foster, kinship, SCO and LTG Carers where a subsidy payment is generated in C3MS. It does not include emergency, respite, specialist, post 18 or financially assisted adoption placements.

For children and young people in a residential care placement, the DCP case worker should liaise with residential care staff to confirm no child or young person is left out.

### Activity Grant Annual Payment Schedule

The activity grant is included in the carer's fortnightly subsidy payment annually at the beginning of August. The payment date will be pre-determined by the Carer Payments team leader in consultation with DCP Finance and the C3MS team.

## 4.2.8 Flexible Respite Support payment

The flexible respite support payment will help carers access a range of respite-like supports in addition to their current support payments.

**Inclusions:**

The payment is available to the following carers with at least one active placement as at the payment date of the relevant quarter:

- Approved and registered primary carers
- Temporary carers who are not yet approved carers in accordance with section 77 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.

If a child or young person enters into a placement shortly after the flexible respite support payment has been made for the quarter, the new carer will not receive the flexible respite support payment until the next scheduled payment (if eligible as at the subsequent payment date).

If a child or young person moves placement shortly after the flexible respite support payment has been made for the quarter, the new carer will not receive an additional flexible respite support payment nor will the flexible respite support payment be recovered from the previous carer who was eligible as at the quarterly payment date.

Carer types that are eligible to receive the flexible respite support payment includes kinship care, general foster care, specialist foster care and specific child only care. Under this payment, temporary carers are considered in alignment with kinship carers.

**Exclusions:**

Carers who are currently ineligible to receive respite care in line with existing DCP policy and guidelines will not be eligible to receive the flexible respite support payment. The following specific exclusions apply:

- Under all post-18 care initiatives, carers cannot currently access respite care along with funding for incidental expenditure, SNL or the activity grant.
- Shared care arrangements are excluded in line with item 4.2.2 in the DCP Respite Policy and item 2.6 in the Carers Support Payments Carers Handbook.
- It is noted that situations of respite can be deemed appropriate in some shared care placements on a case-by-case basis, however; for the intent of the flexible respite support payment those situations are deemed exceptional and not applicable.

## 4.2.9 Cultural plans for Aboriginal Children and Young People

Financial support associated with Aboriginal Children and Young People cultural plans can be accessed through incidental expenses or other discretionary DCP funding sources. Advice on payment should be sought from your child or young person's case worker.

## 4.2.10 Complexity Assessment Tool (CAT) and Special Needs Loadings (SNL)

**CAT assessment**

The Complexity Assessment Tool (CAT) is a screening instrument for measuring behavioural and special needs of the child or young person. It can assist with identifying services and supports that may be required to facilitate a successful placement in OOHC.

CAT enables the following assessment options:

- Level 1: Minor or no problems
- Level 2: Moderate problems
- Level 3: Significant problems
- Level 4: Extreme problems.

For more information regarding the CAT process refer to the Manual of Practice: [Complete \(or update\) the complexity assessment tool](#).

### Special Needs Loading (SNL)

If the CAT assessment results in a level 2 or higher assessment, a Special Needs Loading (SNL) score sheet should be completed by the DCP case worker and approved by the appropriate delegate.

There are two SNL categories:

- **High Intervention (Special Needs) loading** is paid in support of those children and young people exhibiting extremely challenging behaviours that are not associated with an intellectual or physical disability.
- **Physical/Intellectual (Special Needs) loading** is paid in support of children and young people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities.

Once the delegate has approved the CAT assessment and SNL score sheet, the DCP case worker must upload the signed form to the CAT Assessment page in C3MS and email the Carer Payments team to inform them of the approved loading. The Carer Payments team will complete the quality assurance process before adding the SNL information to C3MS to ensure the appropriate loading payment.

SNL will only be paid from the approval date of the current CAT Assessment, providing the assessment was completed within the last 12 months.

Both the CAT and SNL should be reviewed annually by the DCP case worker. If there is a change in primary placement or the child or young person's health condition, a review of the CAT prior to the 12 month review date will be required.

If the CAT level drops to level 1, the DCP case worker must email the Carer Payments team immediately to cease loading payments.

The level of capped loading paid will vary according to the particular needs of the child or young person and is subject to a social work assessment and managerial approval. The current capped SNL rates are available on the DCP website via [Carer Payment Rates and Loadings](#).

### Expenses covered by the SNL

The carer is expected to use the capped loading to pay for the additional costs associated with care of the child or young person that would ordinarily be paid for by DCP through incidental expenses or other internal funding sources.

The DCP case worker in conjunction with the carer and, where possible, the care support worker, must identify the specific areas of expenditure to be covered by the capped loading (eg travel, medical or dietary). These expenditure expectations must be agreed with the carer at the time the loading assessment is completed by the DCP case worker.

To enhance consistency, the loading score sheets should be used as a guide to the expectations of carers at each capped loading percentage level.

### CAT and SNL review, approvals, override and back dated delegation

All CAT and SNL assessments must be approved/reviewed by the respective DCP office manager. Delegation for approval depends on the CAT level and the capped loading percentage, as outlined in the table below and in [Financial Authorisation Register - Specific Authorisations](#).

## CAT Review and Approvals

CAT Level	Reviewer(s)	Approvers
CAT Level 1 & 2	Supervisor	Manager
CAT Level 3 & 4	Supervisor; Manager	Regional Director
<b>SNL Review and Approvals</b>		
SNL Level (%)	Reviewer(s)	Approvers
200% and below	Supervisor	Manager
Greater than 200%	Supervisor/Manager	Regional Director or OOHC Executive Director
<b>SNL override and back dated delegation</b>		
Dollar value (\$)	Reviewer(s)	Approvers
p to \$2,500	Supervisor	Manager
Over \$2,500	Manager	Regional Director or OOHC Executive Director

#### 4.2.11 Refugee Program Payment (Refugee Loading)

The Refugee Program Payment is a 100% capped loading paid to the carers of unaccompanied humanitarian minors who are placed in DCP family based care for the first six months of the placement.

The refugee loading is applied using the loading payment functionality for SNL in C3MS. A full SNL assessment is not required to take place, with the SNL score sheet able to be submitted to the Carer Payments team stating the refugee loading is for six months and a director has approved.

SNL can also be applied as follows:

- if the child or young person's SNL is assessed as 25% to 100%, the carer will be paid the refugee 100% capped program loading for the first six months, and then SNL (eg 50%) will apply after six months
- if the SNL is assessed as 125% to 300%, the carer will be paid the higher rate of loading.

#### 4.2.12 Post 18 payments

Carers of young people under appropriate legal authorities who turn 18 years old and remain in the family home may be eligible for the continuation of carer payments under either the [Stability in Family-Based Care Program](#) or the [Over 18 Education Initiative](#).

If the young person moves out of the carer's home, it is the carer's responsibility to inform the SFBC worker immediately to ensure there is no overpayment made. The SFBC worker must email the Carer Payments team of the change in the young person's circumstance and request to cease payment.

Carer Payments will seek to recoup any monies overpaid due to failure by the carer to inform DCP of the change in young person's circumstance.

For young people in the Over 18 Education Initiative, the Carer Payments team will email the delegated SFBC worker once a term and seek confirmation that the young person is still meeting the necessary criteria. The basic subsidy and education grant will be issued to the carer once confirmation is received.

The SFBC worker must email the Carer Payments team as soon as they are aware a young person ceases their education to avoid overpayment.

The educational circumstances of the child or young person may change or reduce below the full time threshold due to a range of reasons including illness or stress. In the first instance, DCP should speak with the young person, their carer and inform the Carer Payments team leader.

The authority for determining right to entitlement resides with the supervisor of the SFBC team.

## **4.3 Carer payment rules and eligibility by placement types**

### **4.3.1 Emergency placement**

An emergency placement occurs when a child or young person is placed with a carer who has had less than 48 hours prior notice the child or young person will be coming into their care. An emergency placement can be up to seven days and most frequently occur in crisis situations, such as a placement breakdown or emergency removal.

Carers of children or young people in emergency placements are paid the placement start-up payment and subsidy payment rate applicable based on the child or young person's age. If the child or young person is assessed with SNL, carers will also receive the SNL payment. This does not apply to emergency specialist payments.

### **4.3.2 Temporary placement**

Carers of children or young people in temporary placements are paid the placement start-up payment, subsidy payment, activity grant and education grant based on the child's or young person age. If the child or young person is assessed as eligible for a SNL, will also receive this payment.

### **4.3.3 Short-term placement**

A short-term placement is when a child or young person is placed in care, generally for short periods of time, and the situation is not an emergency. These placements have a planned duration of between one day and 18 months. Short-term placements are generally used when assessment and planning is being undertaken, and especially when attempting to reunify with a birth parent(s).

Short-term placements can be recorded against the full range of orders and authorities under which children or young people are placed.

Carers of children or young people in short-term placements are paid the placement start-up payment, subsidy payment, activity grant and education grant based on the child's age. If the child or young person is assessed as eligible for a SNL, carers will also receive this payment.

### **4.3.4 Long-term placement**

A long-term placement occurs when the intent is that the child or young person will remain with a carer long-term. These placements have a planned duration of more than 18 months and generally occur when a child or young person is placed under a Guardianship to Chief Executive to 18 Order.

Children or young people placed in long-term placements are matched with carers who have been approved as long-term carers.

Carers of children or young people under long-term placements are paid the placement start-up payment, subsidy payment, activity grant and education grant based on the child or young person's age. If the child or young person is assessed as eligible for a SNL, carers will also receive this payment.

### 4.3.5 Respite placement

#### Respite from birth family

Respite from a birth family placement is used when a child or young person is in OOHC on a temporary basis for reasons other than child protection. This includes:

- situations where the birth family is unable to care for the child or young person for a short-term
- one-off or irregular short-term care in situations such as when parents are ill and/or in hospital.

In cases where the families require more than 21 consecutive occasions of respite, the worker should seek an authority to make a short-term placement. Standard respite payment rules apply accordingly. The current respite rates are available on the DCP website via [Carer Payment Rates and Loadings](#).

#### Respite from placement

Respite from placement is when a child or young person spends regular, short, planned and agreed periods of time (e.g. two occasions per month) with another carer other than their primary carer.

For more information regarding the respite process refer to the Manual of Practice: [Identify the need for and engage placement supports](#).

### 4.3.6 Shared care placement

Where shared care arrangements apply, the DCP case worker must provide the Carer Payments team with a detailed shared care schedule that specifies the nights of the week when each carer (and the child or young person's birth family, where relevant) each care for the child or young person. This schedule enables the Carer Payment team to calculate the amount each carer is paid.

Carers of children or young people under shared care arrangements are paid the placement start-up and basic subsidy payment rate based on the child or young person's age. If the child or young person is assessed as eligible for a SNL, the carers will be paid this as well.

**Note:** shared care placements can only be recorded by the Carer Payments team. Please contact the Carer Payments team if a shared care placement needs to be created or adjusted.

The following guidance applies to specific shared care types. For a description of each shared care type, refer to Appendix 1.

### 4.3.7 Specialist placement

All requests for specialist foster care placement services need to outline the specific care needs of the child or young person to adequately match the child or young person with the appropriate care arrangement. For example, children and young people must be assessed with a Level 3 or 4 CAT score. Placement of two siblings together, where one sibling is assessed with a lower CAT score, may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Carers of children or young people in specialist placements are paid the specialist subsidy payment. No further loadings or grants are applicable for this placement type.

### 4.3.8 Long-Term Guardianship (Specified Person)

The DCP case worker must contact the Carer Payments team when a Long-Term Guardianship (Specified Person) (LTGSP) order is granted.

To help support guardians, DCP can provide carer payments and loadings where appropriate. The guardian will continue to receive a base rate carer payment until the child or young person's LTGSP order expires.

If the child or young person has been assessed as having special needs, the guardian will continue to receive a SNL on top of their base rate payment. SNL will only be provided where an assessment has been completed in accordance with this procedure, with the SNL level assessed at the time of the LTGSP application in conjunction with the LTGSP care plan. The loading amount will depend on the child or young person's level of special need and requires approval through the SNL assessment form.

All payments, including base rates and SNL, are subject to an annual financial review by a DCP designated officer (from a practice directorate) within the relevant region where the child or young person resides.

For more information, refer to [Long Term Guardianship \(Specified Person\)](#).

### 4.3.9 Financially assisted adoption

Carers of children or young people in a financially assisted adoption placement are paid the basic subsidy rate and education grant based on the child or young person's age. SNL can also be paid based on the CAT assessment. Carers of children or young people who are placed under financially assisted adoption are **not eligible** for incidental expenses.

It is **mandatory** the relevant DCP office annually reviews financially assisted adoption placements to:

- ensure the child or young person is still being cared for by the recipients of the carer payment
- determine if the child's or young person needs have increased/decreased/remain unchanged
- determine whether the carer's financial circumstances have changed.

This review considers the child or young person's care needs and the adoptive parent's financial circumstances. The adoptive parents must complete and sign a Statutory Declaration with details of their financial circumstances.

Financially assisted adoptions that are paid the basic subsidy only require review of the adoptive parents' financial circumstances. The adoptive parents complete and sign a Statutory Declaration outlining their financial circumstances. A visit is not required unless the adoptive parents claim an increase in expenses due to a change in the child or young person's care needs.

## 4.4 Overpayments

An overpayment is defined as any payment issued to a carer to which they are not entitled under applicable legislation. All overpayments are subject to recovery. Only under exceptional circumstances will overpayments be considered uncollectible. Overpayments to carers generally occur when:

- a planned respite does not go ahead and the Carer Payments team is not advised
- a child or young person is missing from the placement and the Carer Payments team is not advised
- a child or young person is reunified with birth parents and the Carer Payments team is not advised
- a placement ends but the Carer Payments team is not advised.
- an administrative error occurs.

The DCP case worker for the child or young person is responsible for contacting the Carer Payments team in the above circumstances to prevent overpayments and when:

- a child or young person is under a shared care arrangement, particularly in those cases where child or young person is being reunified
- a child or young person is no longer living with the carer for any other reason.

### 4.4.1 General rules apply to overpayments

Recovery commences once the overpayment amount is greater than the maximum rate of one night of care and will continue until the overpayment is recovered. Notice must be given to the carer for the overpayment and the recovery amount.

DCP staff will be sensitive to carer/client's individual circumstances and any recovery action is subject to the capacity to repay. If the level of repayment causes extreme financial hardship, DCP staff will discuss the options for repayment with the carer/client. DCP staff will take into account the carer/client's capacity to repay by looking at factors such as carer/client income and the size of the overpayment before agreeing on the amount to be repaid each fortnight. Other factors that may affect recovery action are:

- payment arrangements are realistic
- flexible and convenient methods of payment proposed
- assisting clients towards attaining financial independence
- no carer/client being subject to discrimination.

A person who obtains, aids or abets a carer/client in obtaining benefits by fraudulent means commits a criminal offence. The term "fraudulent means" includes, but is not limited to, wilfully making a false statement, misrepresentation, or impersonation. Any funds obtained by fraudulent means must be repaid in one lump sum payment if considered a non-prosecution case. If the matter goes before a court, the carer/client will make repayment as ordered. The court may order recoupment, lump sum payments or instalment payments.

DCP will not initiate prosecution to recover non-fraud overpayments, but may initiate civil proceedings if the client:

- refuses to acknowledge the claim
- refuses to make full repayment
- fails to fulfil the repayment agreement.

The carer/client will be notified if a civil action will be pursued.

In some instances, overpayment resulting from an administrative error is uncollectible. For example, if changes to a carer's circumstances remain unprocessed and the carer has done everything in their control to bring the discrepancy to DCP's attention (ie there is documented evidence that the carer had advised of the error) there may be grounds to consider the overpayment as uncollectible. Before determining an overpayment will not be collected, the circumstances of the individual case must be provided to and reviewed by the Carer Payments team and Manager, Financial Systems and Compliance Unit (FSCU) to determine what action may be taken.

## 4.4.2 Overpayment recovery

### Recovering overpayments from future subsidy payments to carers

In most cases an overpayment is recovered by making deductions from the carer's future fortnightly carer payment. Some general rules apply to determine how much will be recovered each fortnight:

- Amounts up to \$100 will generally be recovered by making one deduction from the fortnightly payment.
- Amounts between \$101 and \$250 will generally be recovered over 2 - 3 fortnightly payments
- Amounts between \$251 and \$500 will generally be recovered over 4 - 6 fortnightly payments
- Amounts between \$501 and \$1,000 will generally be recovered over 8 - 12 fortnightly payments
- Amounts over \$1,000 may be subject to other recovery arrangements. The Carer Payments team will contact the carer to discuss these options.

### Recovering overpayments when carers have no other children or young person placed

If a carer no longer has a child or young person in their care an overpayment letter will be sent advising of the reason for the overpayment, the amount of the overpayment and options for making repayment. These options include paying by Bpay or electronic bank transfer.

If the former carer does not respond to the letter within 14 days an invoice will be raised with Shared Services SA. Any invoices that remain unpaid will follow the debt recovery process as detailed in the [DCP Debt Management Procedure](#).

## 4.5 Circumstances that may affect carer payment

### 4.5.1 Child or young person in respite

When the child or young person goes to respite, the primary carer will continue receiving basic subsidy payment (but not the capped loading) for the first seven occasions while the child or young person is in respite care. The capped loading will be deducted from the primary carer from the first occasion, for any respite placement regardless of duration.

If the respite placement extends beyond seven occasions, the primary carer will have their basic subsidy payment reduced to 50% of the age related rate for the duration of the respite care. The carer is expected to use this money for ongoing support of the child or young person while they are in respite care eg phone calls, letters, cards, travel etc.

Specialist respite does not reduce the specialist term subsidy for any respite up to 21 occasions.

If a respite placement extends beyond 21 occasions, the primary carer's payment will cease.

### 4.5.2 Holiday absence

Carer payments, at the applicable age related rate, can continue to be paid for up to 21 days to the primary carer while a child or young person in their care is temporarily absent from the placement due to holidays, camps or other recreational reasons. This includes children or young people who are placed in general foster, kinship or SCO short-term, long-term, temporary and shared care. Carers are expected to use their carer payment to assist in providing for the child or young person while they are away. This includes the day-to-day items a parent would pay for while a child or young person is away, eg money to assist family with food costs, travel etc.

Carer payments are not paid to relatives or friends who have the care of the child or young person during holidays unless they are fully approved or temporary carers and DCP supports that the child or young person will be temporarily placed with another carer.

### 4.5.3 Hospital stay

Carer payments, at the applicable age related rate, can continue to be paid for up to 21 days to the primary carer while a child or young person in their care is in hospital or undergoing medical treatment. This includes children or young person who are placed in general foster, kinship or SCO short-term, long-term, temporary and shared care.

Exceptions can be approved by the child or young person's DCP case worker and supervisor. This can include those instances where the treatment continues for a longer period or the carer and child or young person are from a country area requiring the carer to seek accommodation in Adelaide while the child is undergoing treatment.

Carers are expected to visit regularly and actively support the child or young person during the hospital stay or medical treatment. Carer payments will help cover costs associated with providing this support. The child or young person's DCP case worker and supervisor may authorise ceasing the carer payment in those

instances where the carer does not provide a support role for the child while they are in hospital or undergoing medical treatment.

#### **4.5.4 Child or young person is missing or absent from placement**

Carer payments, at the applicable age related rate, can continue to be paid up to 14 days to the primary carer if a child or young person in their care is missing or absent to help cover associated costs eg phone calls, travel associated with attending meetings or looking for child or young person. This includes children or young people who are placed in general foster, kinship or SCO short-term, long-term, temporary and shared care.

Carers are expected to be actively involved in locating the child or young person and assisting in their return. If the child or young person is absent for more than 14 days then the placement will be terminated, though discretion may apply on approval of supervisor.

#### **4.5.5 Child or young person in Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre**

Carer payments can continue to be paid for up to 14 days to the primary carer while a child or young person in their care is attending a justice centre. This includes children or young people who are placed in general foster, kinship or SCO short-term, long-term, temporary, shared care and specialist term placements. Carers are expected to regularly visit and actively support the child or young person while attending the justice centre. The carer payment will help cover costs associated with providing this support. The child or young person's DCP case worker and the respective supervisor may authorise that the carer payment cease when the carer does not provide a support role while the child or young person is at a justice centre. Furthermore, carer payments will cease if the period of time in the justice centre is extended beyond 14 days. Consideration should then be given to whether or not the placement needs to be terminated. Should the placement continue, no other child or young person can be placed with that carer. The DCP case worker is responsible for informing the Carer Payments team of these situations.

#### **4.5.6 Child or young person returns to parent for access or trial reunification**

Carer payments will not be affected until the child or young person is residing with their birth parent(s) for four days or more a week. The DCP case worker is responsible for contacting the Carer Payments team to organise the shared care placement to be recorded in C3MS. 4.3.6 [Shared Care Placement](#) section has more information.

#### **4.5.7 Child or young person is removed due to care concern investigation**

Carer payments will cease payments as soon as the child or young person is removed due to a care concern investigation. The DCP case worker is responsible for advising the Carer Payments team immediately when the removal has occurred.

#### **4.5.8 Carer separation**

When carers of the child or young person are experiencing a relationship breakdown such as divorce and one carer has moved out of the household, the DCP case worker has responsibility to immediately contact the Carer Payments team and the CARU to advise who the primary carer (payee) will be to ensure the correct person receives future carer payments. The carer payments officer will adjust the placement and payment accordingly. Prompt advice is required to avoid incorrectly paying the wrong carer.

In some cases the DCP case worker may arrange for the child or young person to stay overnight(s) with the non-primary approved carer so that they can maintain relationships with both carers. Where this arrangement occurs on a regular basis (eg fortnightly or monthly) the non-primary approved carer can be

paid as a respite carer. If this arrangement is on a weekly basis, both will be paid as shared carers (see section [Shared Care Placement](#) for more information).

#### 4.5.9 Death of a child or young person in care

The Carer Payments team consults with the Carer Payments team leader when notification is received that a child or young person in care has passed away. DCP staff should operate with discretion and cultural sensitivity when discussing arrangements for closing the placement.

Generally payments continue for a full pay period (14 days) before the placement is closed. However, in consultation with the DCP case worker, other arrangements may be supported and approved depending on the case. For further information, refer to [Significant Incident Reporting Unit](#).

#### 4.6 Carer payments delay

The Carer Payments team cannot guarantee that payments will be received by carers when expected. The weekly and fortnightly pay-run end date is Wednesday. Carer payments are scheduled to be in the carer's bank account on Fridays. Sometimes carers may see payments in their bank accounts late on a Thursday afternoon. While this is positive for carers, payment day is Friday and carers should not expect to receive their payment before then.

The Carer Payments team makes every effort to ensure payments are received by carers either weekly or fortnightly on Fridays. Banks and other financial institutions can sometimes have their own internal processing and system issues which may delay payments which is outside of DCP's control.

If there are high numbers of carers telephoning the Carer Payments team on Friday morning because they have not received payment, further investigation is required by all parties involved and appropriate communication/risk management is put in place.

To avoid payment delays C3MS carer payment details need to be updated by close of business Wednesday.

#### 4.7 Bona fide reports

##### 4.7.1 Introduction and purpose of bona fide report

A system of payment bona fides exists to ensure accountability and meet audit requirements (ie evidence that payments are not being made to people who did not actually care for a child or young person). This involves the child or young person's primary DCP case worker confirming a carer did care for a particular child or young person on a particular day and provided a particular care type.

DCP case workers must complete bona fide requests promptly so corrections can be made by the Carer Payments team, thereby minimising impacts and the need for an overpayment recoupment process.

The DCP case worker must approve bona fide reports for the child or young if the placement and payment details are correct in C3MS. If the details are not correct the DCP case worker must provide the correct details using a bona fide correction.

A detailed bona fides C3MS user guide is available on the DCP Intranet [C3MS Guide Bona-Fides](#).

**Note:** DCP case workers receive bona fides reports *after* the carer payment is processed.

##### 4.7.2 Bona fide correction

Bona fide corrections requested by DCP case workers can be accessed via the **Bona Fide Correction** menu within C3MS. Review comments will be provided by the DCP case worker and the Carer Payments team must review and follow-up on the corrections as required. When corrections have been made, the Carer Payments

team always double check the information before applying the correction (there will not always be corrections that need to be applied). When the corrections (if any) have been applied by the Carer Payments team, click the **Bona Fide Summary** tab, select the “**Corrected**” tick box and select the yellow “**Save**” button.

### 4.7.3 Payment certification

Once the DCP case worker for the child or young person approves the bona fide report, the relevant manager certifies the information is correct via the **Payments Certification Summary** page in C3MS. A detailed C3MS guide is available on the DCP Intranet to assist managers and business managers with the [Payment Certification Summary \(Managers & Business Managers\)](#).

The Carer Payments team leader will review outstanding payment certifications on a fortnightly basis via the **Control Reports** menu within C3MS and send a fortnightly reminder to relevant managers to complete any outstanding certifications. Outstanding certifications that are overdue by four weeks or more will be escalated to the regional director for action.

Please note it is important that suitable arrangements be made to ensure certifications are completed in time when office managers are absent or there have been positional movements. New or acting managers must be assigned to the correct office location and position role in C3MS in a timely manner and be familiar with the certification process as detailed in the [Payment Certification Summary \(Managers and Business Managers\) guide](#).

## 4.8 Payments not processed by Carer Payments team via C3MS

### 4.8.1 Pocket money

The fortnightly carer payment has been calculated to include pocket money for the child or young person. Ideally, the amount of pocket money provided will match the amounts paid to other children or young people in the home including the carer’s own children to help the child or young person feel an appreciated member of the carer’s family. Carers do not need to provide pocket money for young people aged 16 years old and over if, they receive a Centrelink Youth Allowance. Further information can be obtained via the Centrelink website.

A suggested [pocket money](#) amount is listed on the DCP website [Carer Payment Rates and Loadings](#).

### 4.8.2 Birthday, Easter and Christmas gifts

Carers are expected to cover the cost of presents for birthdays, Christmas, other religious festivals or special events, birthday parties and special parties for the child or young person. The DCP case worker will also purchase a birthday and Christmas present (or appropriate alternative eg voucher) for the child or young person. In addition, DCP will contribute towards the cost of gifts from the child or young person to birth parents or siblings for birthdays and special occasions, where this is assessed as being necessary, especially during reunification.

For current suggested rates, please refer to [Pocket money and present rates](#).

### 4.8.3 Reimbursement of child care, family day care or other expenses

All child care expenses must be handled in line with DCP guidance to [support a child to attend child care](#) and the [Child Care Subsidy Procedure](#).

## 5. Compliance, monitoring and evaluation

As part of the Policy Governance Framework, this procedure will be reviewed and updated by



Finance and Corporate Services in accordance with the review date shown at 'Document Control'.

## 6. Related documents

Related documents, forms and templates
<a href="#">Carer Payment Rates and Loadings</a>
<a href="#">C3MS intranet</a>
<a href="#">C3MS Guides Care &amp; Protection: Assessment – SDM, Complexity Assessment Tool (CAT)</a>
<a href="#">C3MS Guide Bona Fides</a>
<a href="#">Carer Support Payments Handbook</a>
<a href="#">Stability in Family Based Care</a>
<a href="#">Manual of Practice - Long-term Guardianship (Specified Person)</a>
<a href="#">Significant Incident Reporting Procedure</a>
<a href="#">School</a> and <a href="#">public holidays</a>

## Document control

<b>Reference No./ File No.</b>			
<b>Document Owner</b>		<b>Lead Writer (name, position)</b>	
Directorate/Unit: Finance & Corporate Services Carer Payments		Nistha Shakya Team Leader, Carer Payments	
Accountable Director: Joanne Male, Chief Financial Officer			
<b>Commencement date</b>	01 July 2024	<b>Review date</b>	5 November 2024
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<a href="#">Risk Assessment Matrix</a>	Moderate	Possible	Moderate

REVISION RECORD		
Approval Date	Version	Revision description
July 2017	V2.5	Final
5 November 2021	V3.0	Updated to reflect recent changes including commercial care, specialist payments, pocket money and Birthday/Christmas presents.
21 February 2022	V3.1	Minor amendments regarding Over 18 education initiative eligibility.
28 July 2022	V3.2	Minor amendments regarding change in activity grant eligibility for LTG.
28 June 2023	V3.3	Updated to reflect New Carer Payment Rates & Loading Link including pocket money and Birthday/Christmas presents
5 October 2023	V3.4	Minor changes regarding respite occasions
12 January 2024	V3.5	Inclusion of the new respite support payment eligibility
01 July 2024	V3.6	Updated to reflect New Carer Payment Rates & Loading Link including pocket money and Birthday/Christmas presents

## Appendix A – Key definitions and terms

### Financially Assisted Adoption

A Financially Assisted Adoption is where the prospective adoptive parents of a child or young person with a physical or mental disability, or for another reason is requiring special care, are able to enter into a financial arrangement approved by the Executive Director, Out-of-Home-Care Minister for Child Protection to contribute to the support of a child or young person after an adoption order is made. These arrangements can only be made by Adoption Services Unit (PSU). This support is provided in accordance with clause 26 of the [Adoption Act 1988](#).

### General Foster Care

General foster carers provide emergency, respite, short-term and long-term care for children and young people referred by DCP who are unable to live with their birth families and for whom kinship care is not an option.

### Kinship Care

Kinship Care is the placement of children and young people in need of care and protection with relatives or with any person related to the child, ensuring alignment to the be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

### Long-Term Guardianship (Specified Person) (LTG)

A Long-Term Guardianship (specified person) (LTG) order transfers the guardianship of a child or young person from the Chief Executive to other parties, normally the caregivers of the child.

This gives the caregiver nearly all the rights and responsibilities of a parent. The child or young person can retain connections with their family including birth parents.

### Shared care with birth family placement

A shared care placement with the birth family occurs when an approved carer (can include a general foster, kinship or SCO carer) shares care with the birth family on a planned, regular basis. The care arrangement is identified through a collaborative case planning process involving the child or young person, DCP case worker, carer and birth family. Duration of care may alter from time to time to meet the child or young person and family's changing needs.

### Shared care between two or more caregivers placement

A shared care placement between two or more caregivers occurs when the care of a child or young person is shared between two or more approved carers. This can include general foster, kinship or SCO carers.

### Shared care with residential care placement

A shared care arrangement with a residential care placement occurs when an approved carer (include a general foster, kinship or SCO carer) shares the care of the child or young person with a residential care service on a planned and regular basis.

### Shared care and respite care

Respite care is not possible from shared care or existing respite care placements. If the child or young person is in a shared care arrangement and attends respite placements regularly, the situation should be considered a shared care arrangement among three carers. If carer A needs a break and carer B or C can't have the child or young person either, this situation should be considered an emergency placement.

### Specialist Foster Care

Specialist foster carers care for children and young people who have complex needs. This can include children and young people who have suffered trauma and abuse, and/or who have disabilities or special needs. Specialist foster carers undertake extra training and receive additional support.

For more information refer to [Specialist Family Based Care](#).

### Specialist placement

Specialist foster care services provide individualised care and a supportive, stable placement for children and young people under the guardianship/custody of the Chief Executive who have high, complex needs and behaviours. These children or young people will be accommodated in family based care with trained, skilled carers who receive support, training and supervision from specialist foster care agencies/programs.

### Specific Child Only Care (SCO)

A specific child only (SCO) carer is a person approved to provide care, in their own home, to a specific child or children with whom they have a connection (that does not fit the definition of kinship care) through their personal, professional or ethno-specific community life (which includes sharing a cultural, ethnic or religious community connection with the child), without, in some instances, directly knowing the child or the child's family. The definition of a specific child only carer includes a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural background that is not known to the child and is not considered kin by the family or those with cultural authority for the child.

A temporary placement may be made with a person who fits the definition of specific child only carer, subject to placement criteria being met, as specified in section 77 of the CYPS Act, with carer approval processes to be completed within 3 months of the placement start date.

### Temporary Care

A temporary placement may be appropriate when a potentially suitable kinship or SCO placement is identified with a person who is not an approved carer (and it is not reasonably practicable or appropriate for the child or young person to be placed immediately with an approved carer). The non-approved kinship or SCO carer may be authorised to care for a child or young person using a temporary placement under section 77 of the CYPS Act.



A temporary carer must be assessed as willing and able to provide safe and appropriate care and the placement must not exceed three months unless there are exceptional circumstances. If they are willing and able to continue providing care beyond the three month temporary placement period, the temporary carer can apply to become an approved kinship or SCO carer. A full carer assessment must be completed within three months and if this does not occur, approval for a consecutive temporary placement must be sought from the Executive Director, OOHC.

For more information regarding temporary placements refer to the Manual of Practice section [Assess and seek approval for a Temporary placement](#).