



Carer Support Payments Carer Handbook

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Carer Support Payments

Carer Support Payments include the financial support that is provided for children and young people who are placed with temporary, foster, kinship and specific child only (SCO), long term guardianship (specified person) or financially assisted adoption carers and are paid in arrears. This includes:

- Carer Payments such as carer subsidy payment, loadings, activity grant and education grants
- Incidental expenses
- Other financial supports

These support mechanisms are described in the following sections of this Handbook.

Further information regarding Carer Payments is available at:

Internet: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/support-and-guidance/for-family-based-carers/caring-basics/carers-support-payments>

The Carer Payments team can be contacted on:

Phone: (08) 822 6666

Email: DCPCarerPayments@sa.gov.au

Post: Level 2 East, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide SA 5000

1. Carer Payments

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 provided is 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.

1.2 How much is the carer payment?

Carer payment rates are different depending on a child'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's age does not impact payment received.

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.



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. Note: Carer Payments pay-run end day is **Wednesday**.

1.4 Types of care

This section provides an overview of the care types:

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 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kinship guidance where applicable.

Specific Child Only Care (SCO)

A Specific Child Only (SCO) placement is where a child or young person is placed with a person identified and assessed by DCP as being appropriate to care for that specific child only. SCO carers are referred to a non-government service provider for carer assessment. Once these SCO carers are assessed and approved by DCP they will be eligible for carer payments and will continue to care for a specific child only.

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).

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.

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.

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.



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 to contribute to the support of a child or young person after an adoption order is made. These arrangements can only be made by the Adoption Services Unit (PSU). This support is provided in accordance with clause 26 of the [Adoption Act 1988](#).

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
- Specific Child Only (SCO) carers
- Specialist foster carers
- Carers of children under Long Term Guardianship (Specified Person) (LTG)
- Financially assisted adoption parents
- Carers of young people over 18 years old who are eligible under 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 pursuant to the CYPs Act.

1.6 Types of Carer Payments

1.6.1 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](#).

1.6.2 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 Out of Home Care placement, such as food, clothing, recreation, entertainment, basic medical costs, travel etc.

Further guidance of payment responsibilities and expectations can be found in the carer reference [Who Pays for What?](#)

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](#).

1.6.3 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 care placement with higher needs, such as food, clothing, recreation, entertainment, basic medical costs, travel etc.

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

1.6.4 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.

1.6.5 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 consecutive occasions.

1.6.6 Education Grant

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

- Preschool fees
- The component of primary / secondary school fees not covered by [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 twelve 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) for detailed education grant pay-run dates.

1.6.7 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 allocated 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.

1.6.8 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.

For more information on flexible respite support payment is available on the [DCP website](#).

1.6.9 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.

1.6.10 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 Out of Home Care.

CAT enables the following assessment options:

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

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 allocated case worker. There are currently 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. 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.
- **Physical/Intellectual (Special Needs) loading** is paid in support of children and young people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. The level of capped loading will vary according to the specific needs of the child or young person and is subject to a social work assessment and managerial approval.

Eligibility and how SNL is paid

The allocated case worker will complete the SNL score sheet and attach it to the current CAT Assessment for approval in line with DCP policies and procedures. Approved SNL scores sheets will be processed and the applicable SNL loading will be applied for payment.

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

Both the CAT and SNL should be reviewed annually. 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.

The level of capped loading paid will vary according to the particular needs of the child or young person and is subject to assessment.

If the CAT level drops to level 1, the Carer Payments team should be advised immediately to cease loading payments.

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 (e.g. 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.

1.6.11 Refugee Program Payment (Refugee Loading)

Refugee Program Payment (100% capped loading) is paid in support of young people (Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors) for the first six months they are in family based care. CAT Assessment and Special Needs Loading can also be applied. If the child or young person's Special Needs Loading is assessed as 25% to 100%, the carer will be paid the refugee 100% capped program loading for the first-six months, and then Special Needs Loading (e.g. 50%) will apply after six months. If the Special Needs Loading is assessed as 125% to 300%, the carer will be paid the refugee 100% capped loading until the CAT Assessment and Special Needs Loading are approved and recorded in C3MS.

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.



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.

1.6.12 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.

Under either initiative, carers cannot access respite care, funding for incidental expenditure, SNL or the activity grant.

Stability in Family-Based Care Program (SFBC Program)

The Stability in Family-Based Care Program (SFBC Program) helps young people leaving care to remain in their family-based care placement and provides carers with continued carer payments until the young person turns 21 years old. This payment will be available until the young person moves out of the family home, receives wages that surpass the carer payment or turns 21 years old – whichever is sooner.

If eligible for the SFBC Program, carers will receive the basic subsidy.

Eligibility criteria

The following eligibility criteria apply for the SFBC Program:

- the young person was under one of the following arrangements to the age of 18 years old:
 - Guardianship/LTG (including Specified Person) order
 - Family Care Meeting Agreement
 - other long-term formal agreement for whom the DCP Chief Executive assumed legal responsibility
- the young person turned 18 years old on or after 1 July 2018
- the young person wishes and agrees to continue to reside in the approved primary carer's home on a full time basis beyond their 18th birthday. A 'full time basis' is defined as residing at least four nights per week with the carer
- the approved primary carer agrees for the young person to continue to reside with them in their home on a full time basis beyond the young person's 18th birthday
- the application form is signed by both parties
- the young person is not earning an income that exceeds the carer payment
- the carer is not entitled to another payment for the care of the young person post 18 years old (other than the [centrelink carer payment](#) if eligible)
- it is in the young person's best interests to remain in the family home.

Where a carer is a Homelink care provider, they are ineligible for the SFBC program. The DCP Disability Support Team are available for case consultation and can be contacted at DCPDisabilityProgram@sa.gov.au.

Where a young person is engaged in education, the carer and young person may be eligible for the Over 18 Education Initiative. Please refer to Over 18 Education Initiative eligibility criteria below.

Over 18 Education Initiative

The Over 18 Education Initiative will provide family based carers extended carer payments for a young person until 25 years old if they are engaged in full-time secondary or tertiary education (including VET and FLO) or are undertaking a full time apprenticeship. This payment will be available until the young person



moves out of the family home, completes their qualification or turns 25 years old - whichever is sooner. The family based carers will also receive an education grant paid at the beginning of each term to assist with education costs.

Eligibility Criteria

The following eligibility criteria apply for the Over 18 Education Initiative:

- the young person was under one of the following arrangements to the age of 18 years old:
 - Family Care Meeting Agreement
 - other long-term formal agreement for whom the DCP Chief Executive assumed legal responsibility
- the approved primary carer agrees for the young person to continue to reside with them in their home on a full time basis beyond the young person's 18th birthday. A 'full time basis' is defined as residing at least four nights per week with the carer
- it is in the young person's best interests to remain in the family home
- the young person is participating in secondary or tertiary study. Further education criteria includes where the young person:
 - remains enrolled and participating in full time secondary or tertiary education (including VET and FLO)
 - is undertaking a full time apprenticeship
 - enrolled and participating in any post high school course on a full time basis
 - is in a study arrangement that meets the young person's maximum capacity to engage, being sensitive to their circumstances (such as developmental, intellectual, physical or mental health presentations) and on advice from the education provider and other relevant stakeholders, such as health professionals.

It should be noted there are no income threshold restrictions applicable to the Over 18 Education Initiative.

Exclusion criteria

The following exclusion criteria apply to the Over 18 Education Initiative:

- if the young person was under a LTG order, they are only eligible for the SFBC Program even if participating in full-time education
- If the carer is a Homelink care provider, they are ineligible for the Over 18 Education Initiative. The DCP Disability Support Team are available for case consultation and can be contacted at DCPDisabilityProgram@sa.gov.au.

For more information please refer to the [Carer Support Payments Webpage](#) or the [Stability in Family Based Care Factsheet](#)

Ongoing process

The case on C3MS remains allocated to a delegated SFBC worker within the SFBC team who will provide low-level case management and support as required. The young person is a voluntary client of DCP as they are no longer under a Youth Court order.

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 then advise the Carer Payments team of the change in the young person's circumstance and request to cease payment.

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



For young people in the Over 18 Education Initiative, once a term the Carer Payments team will forward an email to the delegated SFBC worker seeking 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 delegated SFBC worker must contact 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.

1.7 Who do I speak to about other types of carer payments?

Advice on other payments not mentioned above or other DCP funding should be sought from your child's DCP allocated case worker.

2. Carer payment rules and eligibility by placement types

2.1 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.

2.2 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.

2.3 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).

Children or young people placed in short term placements are matched with carers who have been approved as short term carers. Sometimes these carers may specialise in reunification placements.

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.



2.4 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.

2.5 Respite placement

Respite from birth family

Respite from a birth family placement is used when a child or young person is in Out of Home Care 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](#).

How respite can be used

Carers can access up to 24 occasions of respite in a calendar year, which can be taken at any time, either overnight or during the day. A respite placement may be one or more consecutive occasions, but not exceeding 21 consecutive occasions.

- An occasion of day respite is defined by starting and ending on the same date.
- An occasion of overnight respite is defined as starting on one date and ending on the consecutive date. Occasions of overnight respite can be taken separately or combined in a block of time (up to 21 consecutive occasions, beyond which this becomes a Short Term Placement).

Respite can occur in the respite carer's home or at the primary carer's home and the primary carer may be present.

Additional information regarding respite placement can also be found in [Respite Policy \(cp.sa.gov.au\)](#)

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.

Respite care placements aim to provide:

- an opportunity to interact with and be supported by other children or young people and adults
- carers with a break from child care responsibilities
- children or young person with a break from their carer, especially in situations where there is conflict or tension in that relationship. It is important that respite care is not perceived or used as a form of punishing the child or young person
- placement support, especially where children or young people have special and high needs
- an opportunity for siblings who are placed separately to have time together.

Rules that apply to respite care placements include:



- respite care must be based on a social work assessment that demonstrates how the respite will benefit the carer, child or young person and overall placement. Respite care must be based on the assessed needs of the child or young person and be in the best interests of the child or young person
- the amount of child care used by a carer should be taken into consideration when assessing a request for respite care. Respite care should not generally be used when the carer is accessing large amounts of child care (e.g. daily, before and after school). This may negatively impact on the child or young person with him/her feeling rejected or alienated from the carer’s family, or lead to a poor relationship between the child or young person and the carer
- respite care should not generally be used when the child or young person is spending considerable amounts of time in overnight stays with birth parents and birth families
- respite care must be planned in a collaborative manner between the child or young person’s allocated case worker, the carer and the carer’s support worker (where applicable). The plan should be recorded in the child or young person’s case plan
- the child or young person should have a voice when considering and organising a respite care plan. In partnership with the primary carer, the child or young person’s allocated case worker should sensitively explain why the respite care is needed and what will occur. It is crucial the child or young person does not feel he/she is being rejected by his/her primary carers
- respite care should occur as a ‘normal’ part of the carer family’s routine, in the same way that a child or young person in a birth family may have a regular plan for visiting an aunt, uncle or grandparents. Where possible a care team approach will ensure the primary carer and respite carer work closely together and complement one another’s parenting style and expectations. This will ensure continuity for the child and lessen or eliminate any tension for the child or young person
- respite care should not be arranged between carers without the involvement and approval of the child’s or young person allocated case worker
- the primary carer must not accept another child or young person into placement during the respite care period
- a respite care placement request can generally only cover a maximum three months period. This is to ensure a regular process of review is established. In addition, respite placements that have been pre-arranged, but subsequently do not occur, create overpayments. Shorter respite care placement periods help to overcome this issue
- respite placements may be for periods of up to 21 consecutive occasions at a time.

Eligibility for respite care within first three months of placement:

- a primary carer is generally only eligible for respite care after three months from the start of the child or young person’s placement. This is to help the child or young person settle into the routine and support the primary carer’s family
- In some instances, however, a child or young person may have high or special needs or a carer may have a pre-existing commitment (e.g. interstate conference) and hence the primary carer may require respite care within the first three months of the placement
- respite care may be necessary as a support mechanism for both the child or young person (e.g. contact with siblings) and the carer to ensure the placement is maintained. Approval for the respite care placement to occur within the first three months of placement is required by the team Supervisor and must be documented in the respite care placement request.

Respite care payment table

		Primary Carer	Respite carer
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Capped SNL of 25% to 100% inclusive	First seven consecutive occasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic subsidy payment (but not the capped loading) • capped loading will be deducted from the primary carer from occasion one for any respite placement, regardless of duration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic subsidy payment plus 100% respite loading
	Beyond seven consecutive occasions but not more than 21 consecutive occasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic subsidy payment reduced to 50% of the age related rate for the duration of the respite care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic subsidy payment for the duration of the respite care paid weekly
	extends beyond 21 consecutive occasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • payment ceases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respite placement must be changed to a short term care placement and the respite carer will become a short term carer. The payment amount remains the same but is paid fortnightly.
Capped SNL of 175% to 300% inclusive	First seven consecutive occasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic subsidy payment (but not the capped loading) • capped loading will be deducted from the primary carer from occasion one for any respite placement, regardless of duration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic subsidy payment plus the capped SNL (e.g. 175%) for the duration of the respite care. Respite payment is made weekly
	Beyond seven consecutive occasions but not more than 21 consecutive occasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic subsidy payment reduced to 50% of the age related rate for the duration of the respite care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic subsidy payment plus the capped SNL (e.g. 175%) for the duration of the respite care. Respite payment is made weekly
	extends beyond 21 consecutive occasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • payment ceases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respite placement must be changed to a short term care placement and the respite carer will become a short term carer. The payment amount remains the same but is paid fortnightly.



Specialist placement	Up to 21 consecutive occasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialist subsidy payment for the whole period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialist subsidy payment
	extends beyond 21 consecutive occasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialist carer's payment will cease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respite placement must be changed to a specialist care placement. Payment will be made at the specialist subsidy rate and paid fortnightly.

2.6 Shared care placement

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, allocated 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.

Carers of children or young people in shared care with birth family placements are paid for the nights the child or young person is in their care. The amount paid is based on a detailed shared care schedule provided by the allocated case worker or the carer's support worker. The schedule should specify the nights of the week when the carer and birth family each care for the child or young person.

Birth parents or family members are not paid a proportional amount of the carer payment as they are not approved carers. In these circumstances, financial support for the birth family caring for a child or young person in a shared care arrangement can be negotiated.

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.

The carers of children or young people in a shared care arrangement between two or more caregivers are paid for the nights each carer has the child or young person. This amount is based on a detailed schedule provided by the allocated case worker or carer support worker which specifies the nights of the week when each carer provides care for the child or young person.

The education grant will be issued to the carer who has the child or young person most nights during the term. If both carers share the child or young person equally, the Carer Payments team will be required to discuss with the allocated case worker and confirm which carer should receive the education grant. This may alter from time to time to meet the child's or young person's changing needs.

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.

The carers of children or young people in shared care with a residential care service are paid for the nights the child or young person is in their care. The amount paid is based on a detailed schedule provided by the



allocated case worker, carer support worker or the PSU, which specifies the nights of the week when each party cares for the child or young person.

Shared care and respite care

Respite care for periods of one night per week or more on a continuous basis should not be treated as respite care but are more appropriate as a shared care arrangement. However, there are exceptions when weekly respite is permissible. For example, weekly respite as part of a transition plan, reunification plan, when the carer is ill or during school holidays etc. If unsure, please discuss with the Carer Payments team.

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.

Shared care payment

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.

2.7 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.

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.

2.8 Long Term Guardianship (Specified Person) (LTG)

The allocated case worker must contact the Carer Payments team when a Long Term Guardianship (Specified Person) (LTG) 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 LTG 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 LTG application in conjunction with the LT 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.



2.9 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.

3. Overpayment

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 runs away 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 allocated case manager 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.

3.1 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/client of the reason for overpayment and the recovery amount.

3.2 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. 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 for recovery.

4. Circumstances that may affect Carer Payment

4.1 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 consecutive 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 consecutive 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 he/she is in respite care e.g. phone calls, letters, cards, travel etc.

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

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

4.2 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 he/she is away. This includes the day-to-day items a parent would pay for while a child or young person is away, e.g. 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.

4.3 Child in Hospital

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 allocated 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 allocated 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.

4.4 Child or young person has run away/missing from placement

Carer Payments, at the applicable age related rate, can continue to be paid to the primary carer if a child in their care runs away or goes missing. This includes children who are placed in general foster, kinship or specific child only short term, long term, shared care, specialist term placements.

Carers are expected to be actively involved in locating the child and assisting the child return to the placement. The carer payment will help cover costs associated with locating the child e.g. phone calls, travel associated with attending meetings or looking for child.

If the child is absent for more than 14 days, then the placement will be terminated (discretion may applied on approval of supervisor).

4.5 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's or young person 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.

Carer payments will cease if the period of time in the justice centre is extended beyond 14 days.

4.6 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.

4.7 Child 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.

4.8 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 allocated 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 allocated 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 (e.g. 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 .

4.9 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 allocated case worker, other arrangements may be supported and approved depending on the case.

4.10 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 and appropriate communication with carers will follow.

5. Payments not processed by Carer Payments team

5.1 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](#).

5.2 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 case manager will also purchase a birthday and Christmas present (or appropriate alternative e.g. 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](#).

5.3 Child care related expenses

For information regarding child care related expenses please refer to your local DCP office or the DCP webpage [Child care assistance for carers](#).



5.4 Reimbursement of other child or young people related expenses

For information regarding reimbursement of other child and young people expenses please contact your local DCP office or can be found in the carer reference [Who Pays for What?](#)

6. Frequently asked Questions

6.1 Should all children in care have a bank account?

Yes. All children in care should have their own bank account. Please discuss with your child's case worker if he/she does not already have a bank account.

It's very important that you help the child in your care learn money management skills. It is recommended that you have a regular system for helping your child learn about the appropriate use of money.

One way you can do this is by helping your child divide pocket money up into three lots:

- Money for today: money for everyday personal items chosen by the child e.g. stickers, books, etc.
- Money for tomorrow: money for the future e.g. money that is banked and not accessed until after the young person leaves care
- Money for others in need: money for those disadvantaged through natural disasters, drought, political unrest or conflict e.g. overseas aid projects, child sponsorship, etc.

This is just one option. The important point to remember is that you have a plan for helping your child learn to manage their money and that you work together with your child to teach them. This should not start when a young person is about to leave care.

If the child in your care leaves and goes to another placement please inform your child's case worker (if they don't already know) of the system that you used to teach the child. This information can then be communicated to the child's new carer. In addition, you and the child's DCP case worker will need to arrange with the new carer for the bank account to be transferred. This is the child's money and it is important that this money goes with them regardless of where they are placed in the future.

6.2 What happens when a child damages my property or the property of another person?

Department for Child Protection will ensure that you or the other people are no worse off when the damage is caused by a child in your care and it is malicious, intentional or deliberate. You are firstly required to claim against your home and contents insurance or motor vehicle insurance. Department for Child Protection will then pay any applicable excess.

Damage that is not covered by your insurance company will be considered on a case by case basis by DCP.

Department for Child Protection may not assist with the cost of damage if you chose not to insure your home and contents or vehicle. You are required to have vehicle insurance as part of your foster carer registration.

Department for Child Protection will not provide reimbursement for general wear and tear of items in your home.

For more information, please speak to your child's DCP case worker.



6.3 Who do I speak to about other types of care payments?

Advice on other payments such as Incidental Expenses or other DCP funding should be sought from your DCP office or child's social worker.