



Carer Support Payments

Carer Handbook

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Glossary

Acronym	Title	Explanation/description
CARA	Community Accommodation & Respite Agency	
CAT	Complexity Assessment Tool	Refer 1.5.5
C3MS	Connected Client Case Management System	This is Department for Child Protection's case management and record system
DCP	Department for Child Protection	
DECD	Department for Education and Child Development	
GOM	Guardianship of the Minister order	
GOM 12	Child/young person under a GOM order for 12 months	
GOM 18	Child/young person under a GOM order until 18 years of age	
Post-GOM 18	Post guardianship of the Minister over 18	The young person formerly under a guardianship order seeks to remain under the order until s/he completes their schooling
iReg	Initially registered (Initial Registration)	
OOHC	Out of Home Care	
OPG	Other Person Guardianship	
RARP	Resource Allocation Review Panel	
RINC	Youth Justice Remand INC (RINC)	
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education	
SCO	Specific child-only	
VCA	Voluntary Custody Agreement	



Carer Support Payments

Carer Support Payments include the financial support that is provided for children and young people who are placed with general foster, kinship carers and specific child only (SCO) carers. This includes:

- Carer Payments, such as basic subsidy payment, special needs loadings and education grant etc.
- Incidental expenses
- Other financial supports

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

1. Carer Payments

1.1 What is Carer Payment?

Carer Payment is paid to fully registered or initially registered (iReg) carers to help cover the day-to-day, ordinary costs of caring for a child or young person in an OOHC placement. Payments are made for emergency, respite, short term, long term, Post GOM 18 and some Specialist Placements.

Carer Payments are not taxed as they are not deemed 'income' for the carers and do not need to be listed in taxation returns, applications for Commonwealth benefits or when applying for a loan. Carer Payments are reimbursements for the expenses incurred whilst the children are in care.

1.2 How much is the Carer Payment?

Carer Payment rates are based on the age of the child. The current rates are available on the South Australia Government website and Department for Child Protection website, detailed in [Carer payment rates and loadings](#).

Department for Child Protection endeavours to increase Carer Payment and Loadings rates annually to ensure they keep pace with inflation. This increase generally occurs from the 1st of October, subject to appropriate South Australian Treasury and Ministerial approval.

Other payments such as the Placement Start-Up Payment, Education Grant, Activity Grant, Pocket Money amounts etc. are not always indexed but reviewed from time to time to ensure appropriateness.

1.3 How is the Carer Payment paid?

Carer Payment is paid in arrears into the carer's bank account by the DCP Carer Payments Team. Carer Payment is paid fortnightly for short term, long term, Post GOM 18 and some Specialist placements, or weekly for respite and emergency placements.

1.4 Who is eligible for the Carer Payment?

Carer Payments can be made to fully registered or initially registered (iReg) carers including:

- General foster carers
- Kinship carers
- Specific Child Only (SCO) carers



- Carers of children under Other Person Guardianship (OPG)
- Carers of Financially Assisted Adoption children
- or any carer where Department for Child Protection has placed the child with the carer and for whom the Minister has assumed some form of legal responsibility through either formal or voluntary orders and agreements
- Carers of children who have been placed away from their parents as an outcome of a Family Care Meeting Agreement. (Please Note: placements resulting from the outcome of a Family Care Meeting can only be made with relatives or extended family)
- Carers of young people who are:
 - over 18 years of age and have been previously under a Guardianship of the Minister order and where that order has ceased;
 - placed in a general foster, kinship or specific child only care placement;
 - enrolled in full time secondary education (SACE equivalent)
 - an allocated case with DCP.

1.5 Types of Carer Payments

1.5.1 Placement Start-Up Payment

The Placement Start-Up Payment helps cover the initial or immediate costs of a child 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 generally made within 48 hours of the start of the placement.

Start-Up payment is paid to registered general foster, kinship, specific child only carers who provide emergency, short term, long term and some specialist term placement. Specialist foster carers who are funded under contracts with non-government or private agencies are not eligible for this payment.

1.5.2 Basic Subsidy

Basic Subsidy is paid to registered general foster, kinship, SCO, OPG 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.

Basic Subsidy is paid fortnightly to short term, long term, Post GOM 18 and some specialist placements, and paid weekly for respite and emergency placements.

Current Carer payment rates are available on the DCP website, detailed in [Carer payment rates and loadings](#)

1.5.3 Remote Allowance

Remote Allowance is paid to carers who reside in the ABS Remote and Very Remote areas of South Australia in recognition of the higher cost of living in these communities.

Remote Allowance is 10% of the basic subsidy payment.

1.5.4 Respite Loadings



The carers of children in respite care placements are paid the basic subsidy rate for the age of the child **plus** a 100% respite loading up to and including the **first 7 nights** 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. In addition, respite carers are generally not provided with other financial support through Incidental Expenses or other DCP funding sources.

1.5.5 CAT Assessment and Special Needs Loadings

The Complexity Assessment Tool (CAT) is a screening instrument that measures the behavioural and special needs of children and young people. It assesses and scores children across specific areas of behaviour and need to assist in identifying what services and supports are required to facilitate 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

If the CAT Assessment results in a level 2 or higher assessment then a Special Needs Loading score sheet must be manually completed by the case worker. There are currently two Special Needs Loadings as follows:

High Intervention (Special Needs) loading is paid in support of those children and young people with 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 social work assessment and managerial approval.

Physical/Intellectual (Special Needs) loading is paid in support of children and young people with intellectual and physical disabilities. The level of capped loading will vary according to the particular needs of the child or young person and is subject to social work assessment and managerial approval.

The current capped Special Needs Loading rates are available on the DCP website, detailed in [Carer payment rates and loadings](#).

Why are the loading rates capped?

As a consequence of the increases to the Carer Payment in 2007/08, loading amounts for carers of young people aged 13 and over were disproportionately large. This was unfair for all other carers.

Department for Child Protection therefore designed a fairer system for providing financial help to carers of children with special needs. This task began in late 2007 when work started on developing a new system for assessing child needs and payment loadings.

The loadings rates which began on 1 October 2008 were capped based on the 1 July 2007 rates, adjusted to the new Carer Payment age categories, increased by the rate of inflation (as set by the Department of Treasury and Finance) and rounded up to the nearest dollar.

What Special Needs Loading covers



The child's carer is expected to use the capped loading payment to pay for the additional costs associated with the care of the child that would ordinarily be paid for by DCP through Incidental Expenses or other DCP funding sources.

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

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

1.5.6 Refugee Specialist Program Payment (Refugee Loading)

Refugee Specialist Program Payment (100% capped loading) is paid in support of young people (Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors) for the first 6 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 6 months, and then Special Needs Loading (e.g. 50%) will apply after 6 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.

1.5.7 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 part of primary and secondary school fees not covered by School Card
- Books and stationery
- Uniforms and footwear
- Excursions
- Travel
- School photos

Eligibility

All registered general foster, kinship and specific child only carers are eligible to receive the Education Grant when the child/young person in their care is attending pre-school, primary or secondary school on a full-time basis. A child/young person placed under a Voluntary Custody Agreement (VCA) or Parental Authority must be in Out-of-Home care for a minimum of three (3) months before the carer can be paid the Education Grant.

The Education Grant is only paid once per term. If a child/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.

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 Team Leader, Carer Payments will identify the fortnightly pay run dates that occur within each period of the South Australian school holidays as listed on the [Department for Education and Child Development](#) website annually in advance and liaise with C3MS Business Analyst to add the payment dates into C3MS.

Please contact the Carer Payments Team for detailed Education Grant pay-run dates. Current Education Grant rates are available on the DCP website, detailed in [Carer payment rates and loadings](#).

1.5.8 Activity Grant

In 2007 and 2008 a significant review of the Out-of-Home care Support Payments system was undertaken. This review resulted in two significant increases in subsidy payments to carers, an average increase of 21% from 31 January 2008, and a further 18% from 1 October 2008. In part, these increased payments were made to help simplify the current system by giving carers more money to pay for things that were previously paid for by Department for Child Protection. Paying this extra money to carers was aimed at saving carers' time by cutting the "red tape" involved with keeping receipts and having expenses reimbursed. It also saved DCP staff's time and administrative effort by not having to process claims for reimbursement.

It had long been a DCP practice to arrange for Guardianship of the Minister children to attend either the Adelaide Royal Show or one of the local country shows. To facilitate this, funding was provided for the purchase of tickets and individual spending money for each child and young person.

Over a number of years carers advised that the automatic provision of tickets and spending money every year undermined them when they may have made a decision that attendance was not appropriate. They advised such provision placed additional financial burden on them as they then needed to finance their own attendance at the show. In some cases this was further exacerbated when they needed to finance the attendance of their own children as well.

As from 2011, DCP ceased the practice of providing tickets or spending money. Instead, approval was given to provide an annual Activity Grant of \$90.00 – payable to carers on or near the pay period of 1 August of each year.

The introduction of the Activity Grant has empowered carers to make decisions around the children and young people's attendance at various activities, including the shows or other recreational or social activity of their choosing.

Eligibility

The Activity Grant will be paid to general foster, kinship and specific child only care where a subsidy payment is generated in C3MS, excluding emergency, respite (including CARA), Post GOM 18, RINC, OPG or Financially Assisted Adoption placements.

For children and young people in Commercial Care placements it is at the DCP hub/office's discretion whether it provides such financial assistance.

Although Residential Care staff would be looking after this matter, for children and young people in Residential Care placements, it is recommended that DCP staff still check with Residential Care staff to make sure no child or young person is left out.



For children and young people in Specialist Foster Care placements (block funded programs, such as Life Without Barriers, Key Assets, Fresh Start etc.), the Activity Grant is not generated through C3MS as these carers are remunerated at a higher rate than general foster carers. Case workers may need to contact the assigned NGO program officer for further information regarding whether the Activity Grant has been included in the carer's payment package.

Activity Grant Annual Payment Schedule

The Activity Grant will be included within the regular carer's fortnightly subsidy payment annually on or around the 1st August.

1.5.9 Over 18 Education Initiative

Entitlement

To support young people with their education and employment opportunities, all foster, kinship, specific child only who continue to care for a young person after their Youth Court order expires on their 18th birthday will continue to receive modified benefits, as long as the young person:

- Was previously under a Guardianship of the Minister order that has since ceased
- Remains enrolled and participating in full time secondary or tertiary education (including VET and FLO)
- Is undertaking the full time components of an 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 physical or mental health issues) and on advice from the education provider and other relevant stakeholders, such as health professionals
- Having an allocated case with DCP

POST GOM 18 Payments include

- Basic subsidy
- Quarterly education grant

Carers will not be able to access:

- Respite care
- Incidental expenses
- Special Needs Loadings
- Activity Grant



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

Please speak to DCP Carer Payments Team on matters described in this handbook.

Advice on other payments such as Child Care Fee or other DCP funding should be sought from your child's DCP allocated case worker.

2. Overpayment

An overpayment is defined as any payment issued to a carer, which he/she is not entitled to under the various Acts. 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 occur and the Carer Payments Team is not advised.
- A child runs away from the placement and the Carer Payments Team is not advised.
- A child is reunified with birth parents however Carer Payments Team is not notified.
- A placement ends but the Carer Payments Team is not notified.
- An administrative error occurs. E.g. miscalculations.

Carers and the allocated case worker for the child are responsible for contacting the Carer Payments Team when:

- A child runs away from placement.
- A child does not attend respite care.
- A child is reunified with his/her birth parent(s).
- A child is cared for under a shared care arrangement, particularly in those cases where child is being reunified.
- A child is no longer living with the carer for whatever other reason.
- The case worker becomes aware of any overpayment made to a carer.

2.1 Overpayment Recovery

Department for Child Protection is obliged to recover overpayments of carer payments if they occur. This ensures that carers are paid their exact entitlement.

2.1.1 Recovering Overpayments from Future Subsidy Payments to Carers

In most cases an overpayment would be recovered by making deductions from the carer's future fortnightly carer payment until the full amount is recovered.

If repayments are to be made through the carer's fortnightly carer payment some general rules to determine how much will be recovered every fortnight will be applied:

- Amounts up to \$50 will generally be recovered by making one deduction from the fortnightly payment.



- Amounts between \$51 and \$250 will generally be recovered over 3 fortnightly payments.
- Amounts between \$251 and \$500 will generally be recovered over 6 fortnightly payments.
- Amounts between \$501 and \$1,000 will generally be recovered over 12 fortnightly payments.
- Amounts over \$1,000 may be subject to other recovery arrangements. DCP Carer Payments Team staff will contact the carer to discuss these options.

2.1.2 Recovering Overpayments When Carers Have No Other Children Placed

There are three repayment options available if a carer no longer has a child in their care and where the overpayment can't be recovered through future subsidy payments. They are:

- Post cheque(s) to DCP Carer Payments Team.
- Post money order(s) to DCP Carer Payments Team.
 - If using this method, the carer can deduct the cost of the money order from the repayment. For example, if the carer is repaying \$50.00 and the money order costs \$8.95, the carer would have the money order made out to the value of \$41.05, but the \$50.00 will be recorded as his/her payment.
- Visit the local DCP hub/office and make cash payment.
 - If using this method the DCP hub/office Business Support Officer needs to email the Carer Payments Team DCPCarerPayments@sa.gov.au with the amount of the cash paid and the receipt number for the payment.

Payment via online bank transfer (EFT)

There is currently no ability for DCP to support payments to be made by carers via online banking.

For more information or to negotiate the overpayment recovery amount please contact the Carer Payments Team via 8226 6666 or DCPCarerPayments@sa.gov.au

3. Circumstances that may affect Carer Payment

3.1 Child or Young Person in Respite

When the child goes to Respite the primary carer will continue to receive basic subsidy payment (but not the capped loading) for the first seven (7) nights while the child is in respite care. The capped loading will be deducted from the primary carer from night one for any respite placement regardless of duration.

If the respite placement extends beyond seven (7) nights, 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 while they are in Respite Care e.g. phone calls, letters, cards, travel, etc.

If a respite placement extends beyond 21 nights, the primary carer's payment will be ceased.



3.2 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 who are placed in general foster, kinship or specific child only short term, long term, shared care, specialist term placements.

Carers are expected to use their carer payment to assist in providing for the child while the child is away. This includes the normal things that a parent would pay for while a child is away on holidays or visiting family or friends e.g. money to assist family with food costs, travels etc.

Carer Payments cannot be paid to relatives or friends who have the care of the child during holidays unless they are fully registered or initial registered carers and DCP supports the need for the child to be temporarily placed with another carer.

3.3 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 in their care is in hospital or undergoing medical treatment. This includes children who are placed in general foster, kinship or specific child only short term, long term, shared care, specialist term placements.

Exceptions can be approved by the child's case worker and supervisor (and manager if delegation requires this approval). This can include those instances where the treatment continues for a longer period or the carer and child are from a country area requiring the carer to seek accommodation in Adelaide while the child is undergoing treatment.

Carers are expected to regularly visit and actively support the child during the child's hospital stay or medical treatment. The carer payment will help cover costs associated with providing this support.

The child's 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.

3.4 Child has Run Away 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).

3.5 Child in Training Centre

Carer Payments, at the applicable age related rate, can continue to be paid for up to 14 days to the primary carer while a child or young person in their care is in a Training Centre. 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 regularly visit and actively support the child or young person while they are in Training Centre. The carer payment will help cover costs associated with providing this support. The child's case worker and supervisor may authorise ceasing of the Carer Payment in those instances where the carer does not provide a support role for the child or young person while they are in a Training Centre.

Carer Payments will cease if the period in the Training Centre is extended beyond the 14 day period.

3.6 Child Returns to Parent for Access or Trial Reunification

Carer Payments will not be affected until the child is regularly residing with their birth parent(s) for 4 days or more a week. At that time it is case worker's responsibility to contact Carer Payments Team to organise the shared care placement recorded in C3MS.

3.7 Child is removed due to Care Concern Investigation

Carer Payments will cease as soon as the child or young person is removed from the carer due to a Care Concern Investigation.

3.8 Carer Separation

When carers of the child are separating or during a relationship breakdown or divorce, and one carer has moved out of the household, it is case worker and carers' responsibility to contact Carer Payments Team and Carer Registration immediately.

The case worker or the carer will be required to provide information to the Carer Payments Team as to 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. It is very important for the case worker and the carer to advise the Carer Payments Team with this information as soon as possible to avoid the wrong carer being paid (overpayment) and the correct carer being underpaid.

In some cases the case worker may arrange for the child to stay overnight(s) with the non-primary registered carer for the child to maintain a relationship with both carers. If this arrangement is on a regular basis (e.g. monthly or fortnightly) the non-primary registered carer can be paid as a Respite Carer. If this arrangement is on a weekly basis, both carers will be paid at the Shared Care rate.

3.9 Child/Young Person in Care Passes Away

Generally payments will continue for a full pay period (14 days) before the placement is closed. However, in consultation with the case worker, other arrangements may be supported and approved depending on the case.

4. Carer Payments Delay

The Carer Payments team cannot always guarantee that payments will be received by carers when expected. The Carer Payments weekly and fortnightly **payrun end date is Wednesday**. Carer Payments are scheduled to be available to carers in their banks on Fridays. **Friday is deemed to be payment day** for weekly and fortnightly paid carers. However, sometimes carers may see payments in their bank



accounts late on a Thursday afternoon. Whilst this is a positive for carers, payment day is a Friday and carers should be cautioned from the expectation that they will always receive their payments on a Thursday.

The Carer Payments team makes every effort to ensure that payments are received by carers either weekly or fortnightly on Fridays. However, banks can sometimes have their own internal processing and system issues which may delay payments and this is out of the control of Department for Child Protection.

5. Frequently asked Questions

5.1 What is the current rate of pocket money?

Department for Child Protection does not pay pocket money directly into the bank accounts of children in care. Your fortnightly Carer Payment has been calculated to include pocket money for the child in your care.

Ideally, the amount of pocket money you give will match the amounts that you pay other children in your care or your own children. This will help the child in your care feel like a normal, accepted and appreciated member of your family.

If you are still not sure how much to pay then the **suggested** weekly pocket money is provided in the [Carer payment rates and loadings](#). You do not need to provide pocket money for young people aged 16 years and over as they should be receiving money through Youth Allowance.

5.2 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.

5.3 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.

5.4 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 the DCP hub/office you are working with, particularly your child's DCP allocated case worker.

- **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. The case manager will also purchase a birthday and Christmas present (or appropriate alternative e.g. voucher) for the child. In addition, DCP will contribute toward the cost of gifts from the child to birth parents or siblings for birthdays and special occasions, where this is assessed as being necessary, especially during reunification.

Carers are to contact the allocated case worker from the DCP hub/office for additional information.

- **Reimbursement of child care, family day care or other expenses**

Reimbursement of Child Care, Family Day Care or other care expenses such as mileage rests with the allocated DCP hub/office s and not the Carer Payments team.

Carers are to contact the allocated case worker from the DCP hub/office for additional information.



6. Contacts and Notes

DCP Carer Payments Team

- Phone: (08) 8226 6666
- Email: DCPCarerPayments@sa.gov.au
- Postal address: Level 2 East, 31 Flinders Street, Education Building, Adelaide SA 5000

DCP child's case worker

Service Provider Agency and Support worker

Notes
