

## **Freedom Card Scheme Guidance for use**

The Freedom card scheme is funded through the Looked After & Permanence budget, part of Children's Services, Durham County Council. The scheme continues to be valued by children, young people and foster carers supporting children and young people and having a positive impact on placement stability. Investing in Children CIC administer the Freedom Card Scheme on behalf of Durham County Council.

### **Freedom Card entitlement:**

Who is entitled to a Freedom Card:

- All Looked After Children and Young People who are the legal responsibility of Durham County Council.
- Foster Carers registered and paid for by Durham County along with their birth children up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Children and young people in the care of an Independent Fostering Agency.

### **There are two types of Freedom Card:**

- *Family Freedom Card*
  - Durham County Council Foster Carers can register for a freedom card to access family activities with a looked after young person aged between 1 and 13 years. This can also be used for activities with a looked after young person aged 14+ when going out as a family. (Individual arrangements can be made if there are more than 5 people in your family).
  - Kinship Carers who have been to panel and continue to be paid as Kinship Foster Carer's for the local authority – confirmation of status to be provided by Team Manager
- Young Person Freedom Card –
  - Young people placed by Durham County Council aged 14+ can apply for their own card to access leisure facilities.
  - Any child placed with an Independent Fostering Agency Carer
  - Residential Units

Freedom Cards are **not** issued to:

- Durham County Council Foster Carer's birth children over age 18.
- Durham County Council Foster Carer's other family members.
- Temporary Approved Kinship Carer's (i.e. those who have Regulation 24 Approval)
- Independent Foster Carer's

### **Freedom Cards CANNOT be used for:**

- Supervised Contact

## **Note – Requests for freedom Cards must be made by:**

- The Fostering Team at Durham Council
- Foster Carers including Independent Fostering Agency Carers
- Residential Units

## Details required for the issue of a Freedom Card:

Completion of a Freedom card registration form as follows:

- For children and young people aged 1 to 13 years - Family Freedom Card registration form to be completed by Durham County Council paid Foster Carers and long-term kinship carers
- For young people aged 14 and over – Young Person Registration Form
- For all children and young people placed by Durham County Council with Independent Fostering Agency Carers – Young Person Registration Form

## Following issue of Freedom cards:

- As you know the Freedom Card scheme was designed to benefit children and young people and to encourage family activities. For this reason, the Freedom cards should not be used to access any venues unless accompanying a Durham County Council placed child or young person. The Freedom Card is **NOT** for use by Foster carers and birth children without being accompanied by a looked after child or young person. Thank you in advance for your co-operation in this matter.
- The cards each have a number written on them this is so we can identify who is using the card. If during monthly monitoring, it is found that cards have been misused, you agree to repay the cost to Investing in Children CIC.
- Please note that Freedom Cards belong to the Foster carer if the child is under age14. Freedom Cards belong to the young person if 14+ and therefore should transfer with them if they move. Should they leave care please inform Jill Douglas in order to cancel the card.

## **Freedom Card use:**

The Freedom Card has a set budget every year and we must ensure that the spend stays within. Therefore, it has been necessary to set some new limits to ensure the Freedom Card stays within budget. The changes in the use of the Freedom Card have been discussed with the Children and Care Council and Senior Managers. This new guidance is effective from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

***Foster Carers are also reminded that there is an allocation within the Fostering Allowance for activities.***

## **New Guidance:**

The Children in Care Council asked for Looked After Children and Foster Carer's to consider the cost of each activity and have come up with the following:

- Low Cost – anything under £5.00  
*Regular activity such as swimming or soft play no more than once a week.*

- Medium Cost – anything between £5.00 - £10.00  
*Activities should be limited - up to six times per year.*
- High Cost – anything between £10.00 - £20.00  
*Activities which are a little more specialised which could be visited on a special occasion or during holidays. Maximum two times per year.*

**In addition:**

**Swimming lessons**

*This remains the same:* ASA guidelines advise that children and young people should be able to swim after 25 concurrent swimming lessons. The Freedom Card scheme will pay for one block of swimming lessons at a Leisure Centre within a child's time in Durham County Council care. *DCC Leisure Centre's charge the same across County Durham, if an alternative venue is used the Freedom Card will pay the standard rate and the Foster Carer will be expected to fund the difference from the activity allowance within their Fostering Allowance.*

(Please note key stage 2 children should get swimming lessons in school being mindful that schools also receive a pupil premium for looked after children. This is something you might want to discuss further with the school).

**Activities above £20.00**

- Anything above £20.00 will **ONLY** be paid for by the Freedom Card once per year.

**Risk of Overspend:**

The Freedom Card spend is constantly reviewed. It will be reviewed at the end of November every year and if there is a risk of overspend a restriction of activity will be implemented from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January to 31 March each year, if this is the case you will be advised by the end of December.

***This restriction will mean that Freedom Card activity is limited to Durham County Council Leisure Services venues and the activities they offer.***

***Current list of venues where Freedom Cards can be used:***

**Durham City**

Abbey Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 266443
Meadowfield Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 266445
Freeman's Quay Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 268488
Botanic Garden	Tel: 0191 3345521
Oriental Museum	Tel: 0191 3345694

**Chester le Street**

Chester le Street Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 266444
Riverside Sports Complex	Tel: 03000 266447

**Easington**

Peterlee Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 261 084
Seaham Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 261 085
Tweddle Children's Farm	Tel: 0191 5863311

### **Sedgefield**

Shildon Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 266448
Spennymoor Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 261161
Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 266446
Ruff "N" Tumble	Tel: 01325 313777
Planet Leisure	Tel: 01325 310989

### **Wear Valley**

Spectrum Leisure Complex	Tel: 01388 747000
Woodhouse Close Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 261322
Bamboozles Adventure World	Tel: 01388 778254

### **Teesdale**

Teesdale Leisure Centre	Tel: 03000 260862
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### **Derwentside**

Louisa Centre	Tel: 01207 218877
Consett Leisure Centre	Tel: 01207 218151
Diggerland	Tel: 08712 277007
Hall Hill Farm	Tel: 01388 731333
Krazy Kingdom	Tel: 01207 528899

### **Tyne & Wear**

Wetlands Washington	Tel: 0191 4165454
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Investing in Children CIC also facilitate the Children in Care Council for more information visit their website: [www.durhamcicc.co.uk](http://www.durhamcicc.co.uk).

The Freedom Card Scheme is administered by Investing in Children CIC. Should you have any questions please contact the office on 0191 3077030 or by email [info@investinginchildren.net](mailto:info@investinginchildren.net)

*Updated 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022*