

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

5 JUNE 2018

Report of the Strategic Director for Children’s Services

Fostering Allowances

1. Purpose of Report

To:

- Update the Cabinet Member on the work done to revise a range of fostering and child-related allowances
- Seek agreement to amend the fostering allowance scheme and re-invest the relevant sums in line with proposals

2. Information and Analysis

Derbyshire’s Sufficiency Strategy is reliant on recruiting and retaining enough foster carers, both mainstream and contract. The intention is to place as many children as possible within the Authority, with Derbyshire carers and staff, and to lessen the reliance placed on external providers, both within fostering and residential placements for both cost and quality reasons.

During 2016/17, the Fostering Service undertook Phase One of the review of allowances and developed a new Fostering Skills Allowance (FSA) which more closely recognised training and skills and also incentivised occupancy. Such an approach had already been taken in other Local Authorities. Whilst working on this project with foster carers, the expressed aim, subject to other pressures, was that although the objective was not to make savings, any that were made through better use of available funding, would be reinvested into the fostering service.

When the new FSA scheme was introduced in April 2017, a lower amount of allowance was set than the amounts anticipated for the service in future; this was deliberate to test out the new scheme in terms of effectiveness and spend. After some transitional problems, the new scheme has contributed to more focused skills development and increased occupancy. The initial low levels also ensured that the scheme fitted within the current budget and enabled options appraisal

work, detailed below, to use the related sums to enable service development to better meet service need.

The related changes resulted in a projected difference between the previously allocated budget spend and projected amounts for 2018/19 of £126,446.

Phase Two of the allowances review has been carried out during 2017/18. There have been a number of work-streams with foster carers and fostering staff which have co-produced recommendations.

The overall aim is to ensure that best use is made of available resources to meet service needs and with allowances that are fair and consistently applied across the County, and which are simple to understand and administer for foster carers, fostering teams and the fostering payments team.

The proposals are directly based on recommendations from foster carers.

The proposals also meet key objectives of:

- Meaningful and evidenced co-production of service development with foster carers (the importance of this in influencing retention is described in the recent national report, "Foster Care in England: A Review for the Department for Education" by Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers).
- Lessening complexity and delay in payments for foster carers (a regular theme in complaints)
- Incentivising increased occupancy of fostering households
- Encouraging skills development
- Increasing the number of carers able and willing to take emergency placements
- Ensuring Derbyshire is as competitive as possible compared to neighbouring Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies.

This report is to request that some of the projected difference between the previous relevant budget spend and projected amounts for 2018/19 of £126,446, is largely re-invested in increasing the Fostering Skills Allowance for Bands A, B and C, and supporting the recommendations from Phase Two.

If the proposals are agreed, the residual sum may be slightly reduced by any increase in fostering capacity or movement across bands, both of which would be desirable. Any leftover funds could be used to offset the agreed growth bid to meet the agreed 2% inflationary increase and thus be still broadly compliant with the commitment made to foster carers

that changes were not designed to achieve cuts but to make best use of available resources.

3. Financial Considerations

This table shows the additional cost or saving of implementing each recommendation, with costs being met from the relevant budget.

Recommendation Number	Description	Cost
1.	Amalgamate 0-1 age range payment into 2-4 age range	£4,950.40
2.	Increase Banding payments for fostering skills allowance	£9,574.00
3.	Pay multiple placement fee for 3 or more children	£35,620.00
4.	Revise Link Care Scheme payment and backdate FSA payments	£20,111.16
8.	Revise Short Break Scheme payment	£3,129.96
9.	Make Out of Hours Placement payment	£10,400.00
Total costs		£83,785.52

As described in the Children in Care Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2017/21, placement with Derbyshire foster carers is more cost effective than any other type of placement.

4. Legal and Human Rights Considerations

When children cannot live with their birth families, providing high-quality foster homes is for the majority the most effective way of enabling them to 'be the best they can be'. It supports the Local Authority to meet the Human Rights Act 1998, Article 8 – regarding family life, both to live in as normal a home as possible and also that keeping children in their locality enables them to maintain contact with their family. Maintaining sufficient foster placements is required for Derbyshire County Council to meet its 'Sufficiency Duty', as laid down in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 and Statutory Guidance Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (2009).

5. Social Value Considerations

The value of fostering placements is considerable, and often enables a young person to stay in their local community and attend their local school. It also reduces the need for agency or residential placements.

6. Equalities Impact

A key focus of the fostering service is to ensure appropriate ethnicity and cultural matches between foster carers and children, ensuring all health needs and equality issues are fully addressed through the fostering offer and a strong focus on positive outcomes for children who require a foster home.

7. Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: - prevention of crime and disorder, equality of opportunity; and environmental, health and transport considerations.

8. Key Decision

No

9. Call-In

Is it required that the call-in period be waived in respect of the decisions being proposed within this report? No.

10. Background Papers

File held by Service Director – Early Help and Safeguarding

11. Strategic Director's Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member notes the information regarding the work and analysis undertaken and agrees the recommendations below:

- Amalgamate 0-1 age range payment into 2-4 age range
- Increase Banding payments for fostering skills allowance
- Pay multiple placement fee for 3 or more children
- Revise Link Care Scheme payment and backdate FSA payments
- Revise Short Break Scheme payment
- Make Out of Hours Placement payment

And that these changes are applied from 1st July 2018.

Jane Parfremment
Strategic Director for Children's Services