

**11 March 2013****Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE****NATIONAL MINIMUM FOSTERING ALLOWANCES****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report proposes that Nottinghamshire County Council continues to pay its foster carers the National Minimum Fostering Allowances, at the rates prescribed by the Department for Education. Allowances are payments made by the Local Authority, to its foster carers, for the living costs of fostered children. These rates are also used in calculating Adoption Financial Support arrangements.
2. This report also proposes that Nottinghamshire County Council maintains the payment rates, as set in 2012/13, in its additional and specific fostering allowances/fees to its foster carers. Due to budgetary control measures, Nottinghamshire County Council is unable to provide an inflationary increase to these payments. This is the third successive year in which additional and specific fostering allowances have not been increased.
3. Furthermore, the report proposes that Nottinghamshire County Council continues to base its means tested financial support to the carers of children on Special Guardianship Orders, on Residence Orders, and those eligible for support post Adoption Order, on the National Minimum Fostering Rates, and therefore also uplift these to the new rates for 2013-14.

**Information and Advice**

4. The Children Act 2004 (Section 49) introduced new powers for the Government to compel local authorities to pay foster carers at prescribed rates.
5. On 27 July 2006, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) announced the recommended rates for the National Minimum Fostering Allowances for Foster Carers. These rates were effective from 1 April 2007. Previous annual delegated decisions agreed that Nottinghamshire County Council would pay these recommended rates. Prior to March 2011, other additional and specific fostering allowances were annually inflated by the rate of inflation as determined by the County Council.
6. Nottinghamshire currently pays its foster carers a weekly allowance and makes available other additional and specific allowances to pay for disturbance costs (where a child is placed with a foster carer with less than twenty four hours notice), immediate clothing and school uniform costs and additional costs in meeting the individual needs of particular fostered children.

7. The report proposes that Nottinghamshire County Council continues to pay its foster carers the National Minimum Fostering Allowances, at the rates prescribed by the Department for Education. These allowances are payments made by the Local Authority, to its foster carers, to cover the costs involved in looking after a fostered child. The current Department for Education rates that Nottinghamshire pays its foster carers are a weekly allowance of £117 for a child aged 0-4, £129 for a child aged 5-10, £148 for a child aged 11-15 and £172 for a child aged 16-17.
8. The new rates prescribed by the Department for Education for 2013/14 are:
  - £119 (for a child aged 0-4)
  - £132 (for a child aged 5-10)
  - £151 (for a child aged 11-15)
  - £175 (for a child aged 16-17)
9. The number of looked after children has risen significantly over the last four years and 896 children were looked after by the Local Authority as at 31 December 2012. Of these 896 children, 676 children (75%) were placed in foster care. 279 of these children were placed with an Independent Fostering Provider and 397 of these children (59% of all children placed in foster care; 44% of all looked after children) were placed with a foster carer approved by Nottinghamshire County Council.
10. Foster carers approved by Nottinghamshire County Council provide a best value care placement when compared with other care providers. An internal fostering placement costs the Local Authority approximately 50% less per annum than a fostering placement purchased in the independent fostering sector. The expansion of internal fostering is a priority identified within the Children's Social Care's Transformation Programme.

### **Other Options Considered**

11. No other options have been considered.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

12. The Local Authority is required by law to pay its foster carers the National Minimum Fostering Allowances.
13. Payment ensures the authority's compliance with Section 49, Children Act 2004.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

14. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

15. The prescribed rates for 2013-14 represent an increase of 2% on last year's rates. This annual inflationary increase was anticipated and is included in the Children's Social Care

division's 2013-14 budgets where payments are made at, or linked to, the National Minimum Fostering Allowances.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That:

- 1) Nottinghamshire County Council pays its foster carers a weekly allowance, at the national minimum rates prescribed by the Department for Education, as detailed in paragraph 8.
- 2) Nottinghamshire County Council continues to base its means tested financial support to the carers of children on Special Guardianship Orders, on Residence Orders, and those eligible for support post Adoption Order, on the National Minimum Fostering Rates, and therefore also uplift these to the new rates for 2013-14.

**Steve Edwards**  
**Service Director, Children's Social Care**

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### **Constitutional Comments (LM 21/02/13)**

16. The Children and Young People's Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

### **Financial Comments (KLA 21/02/13)**

17. The financial implications of this report are set out in paragraph 15 above.

### **Background Papers**

Previous delegated decision reports on National Minimum Fostering Allowances

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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