

19 March 2018**Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL
WORK****NATIONAL MINIMUM FOSTERING ALLOWANCES AND FEES TO FOSTER
CARERS****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 as detailed in **Appendix 1**.
2. This report also proposes that Nottinghamshire County Council makes no change to the payment rates, as set in 2016/17, in its additional and specific fostering allowances/fees to its foster carers.

Information and Advice

3. The Children Act 2004 (Section 49) introduced new powers for the Government to compel local authorities to pay foster carers at prescribed rates.
4. 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. The Council has previously agreed to pay the recommended rates each year since 2007. Prior to March 2011 other additional/specific fostering allowances and fees to foster carers were annually inflated by the rate of inflation as determined by the County Council.
5. The report proposes that the 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. Nottinghamshire currently pays its foster carers a weekly allowance of £128 (for a child aged 0-4 years), £141 (for a child aged 5-10 years), £161 (for a child aged 11-15 years) and £188 (for a child aged 16-17 years). The weekly allowance, as of 1st April 2018, will increase to £130 (child 0-4 years), £143 (child 5-10 years), £164 (child 11-15 years) and £191 (young person 16+). Details are attached as **Appendix 1**.
6. 799 children were looked after by the Local Authority as of 15 February 2018. Of these 799 children, 73% were placed in foster care. Of all the children placed in foster care,

40.6% were placed with an independent foster provider and 59.4% were placed with a foster carer approved by Nottinghamshire.

7. Foster carers approved by the Council provide a best value care placement when compared with other care providers. An internal fostering placement costs the Council approximately £300 per week less than a fostering placement purchased in the independent fostering sector.

Other Options Considered

8. The Local Authority is required to pay the National Minimum Fostering Allowances (Section 49, Children Act 2004; Standard 28.1 National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011). No other options have been considered.

Reason for Recommendation

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

Statutory and Policy Implications

10. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment 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

11. The prescribed rates for 2018/19 have just been published. Nottinghamshire currently pays its foster carers a weekly allowance of £128 (for a child aged 0-4 years), £141 (for a child aged 5-10 years), £161 (for a child aged 11-15 years) and £188 (for a child aged 16-17 years). The weekly allowance, as of 1st April 2018, will increase to £130 (child 0-4 years), £143 (child 5-10 years), £164 (child 11-15 years) and £191 (young person 16+). The increase will be contained within the overall 2018/19 Fostering budget.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1) Nottinghamshire County Council continues to pay foster carers a weekly fostering allowance, as detailed in **Appendix 1**, at the national minimum rates, as prescribed by the Department for Education.
- 2) Nottinghamshire County Council makes no change to the payment rates, as set in 2016/17, in its additional and specific fostering allowances/fees to its foster carers.

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Constitutional Comments (SMG 27/02/18)

12. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (SAS 27/02/18)

13. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 11 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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