



20 March 2017

Agenda Item: 7

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

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 maintains the payment rates, as set in 2016/17, in its additional and specific fostering allowances/fees to its foster carers. Details of these allowances are attached as **Appendix 2**.

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 £126 (for a child aged 0-4 years), £139 (for a child aged 5-10 years), £159 (for a child aged 11-15 years) and £185 (for a child aged 16-17 years).
6. National Minimum Fostering rates for 2017/18 are increasing to £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).

7. In 2016 a change was made to the way specific or additional living costs were paid for fostered children. A weekly fostering supplement of £10 per week was added to the fostering allowance to reduce the inefficiency and inequity of individual requests. This has saved considerable officer and administration time. It is therefore recommended that the additional weekly fostering supplement of £10 continues to be paid to foster carers in place of individual requests for additional living costs.
8. 781 children were looked after by the Local Authority as at 13th February 2017. Of these 781 children, 71% were placed in foster care. Of all the children placed in foster care, 37% were placed with an independent foster provider and 63% were placed with a foster carer approved by Nottinghamshire.
9. 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. The expansion of internal fostering is being considered as part of the Children's Transformation Programme.

Other Options Considered

10. 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

11. 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

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, 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

13. The prescribed rates for 2017/18 represent an increase of between 1.26% - 1.62% on last year's rates. This increase will be contained within the overall 2017/18 Fostering budget.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1) Nottinghamshire County Council pay its foster carers a weekly fostering allowance, at the national minimum rates, as prescribed by the Department for Education.
- 2) Nottinghamshire County Council maintains the payment rates, as set in 2016/17, in its additional and specific fostering allowances/fees to its foster carers.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Children's Social care

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Naomi Sills
Fostering Service Manager
T: 0115 977 4213
E: naomi.sills@nottscc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LM 22/02/17)

14. The recommendations in the report fall within the Terms of Reference of the Children and Young People's Committee.

Financial Comments (SS 01/03/17)

15. The financial implications of this report are contained within paragraph 13 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0962