



Portfolio Holder Decision
Making Session and date/time

21st July 2015

10-11am

Item

1

Public

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR FOSTER CARERS

Responsible Officer Tina Russell Head of Social Work and Safeguarding
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1. Summary

- 1.1 Having foster care placement provision for children who cannot remain in the care of parents or family members is an essential part of our strategy to support children in care to have a safe stable family life experiences and to achieve good outcomes. It is also part of our sufficiency duty to provide a range of care placement provision to meet the different needs of children in care.
- 1.2 The financial payment arrangements outlined in the document represent a real attempt to develop the skills of our foster carers and have clear expectations of them as carers acting on behalf of the LA and as such actively supporting social workers and parents to implement children's care plans.
- 1.3 We expect a high standard of care and commitment from all foster carers to enabling children in their care to achieve outcomes against their care plan.
- 1.4 The payment policy is focused on outcomes for children and has in place a mechanism to recognise the skills and expertise of foster carers. Levels 1, 2 and 3 skills payments is the financial reward given for this work. However we also believe that for certain children the level of skill and commitment required for a period of time may mean that a carer has to go "above and beyond". The payment policy enables individual carer to be rewarded where children outcomes have been achieved beyond expectation through the dedication, skill and commitment of the carer.
- 1.5 We need to develop our in house foster care provision to meet the needs of larger sibling groups and teenagers/children with challenging behaviours to meet a gap in our internal resource. We currently meet this through the commissioning of external foster care placements. It is anticipated that exceptional skills payment will relate to larger sibling groups, teenage placements or younger children with significantly challenging behaviours and will as such be an incentive of being a foster carer for Shropshire and for this cohort of children.
- 1.6 The financial payment of foster carers is linked to the training and support strategy for foster carers. By constantly striving to increase the skill base of all our foster carers we will see a consequent improvement in placement stability leading to better outcomes for Shropshire's looked after children.

- 1.7 This revised policy is also an attempt to reinforce the fair and transparent payment structure coupled with the Councils commitment to continue paying Fostering Network's recommended allowances and represents a realistic reward structure given the pressures on the public purse in 2015.
- 1.8 The scheme is only available to foster carers approved by, and registered with, Shropshire Council

2. Recommendations

That the portfolio holder approves this policy and its implementation.

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 The current policy has created a small cohort of households who are "level 4" carers. This policy seeks to remove the current "level 4" foster carer payment structure.
- 3.2 We have at this time six foster care households at level 4. We will need to negotiate on a case by case basis how the new policy effects these placements with the stability of care for the associated children being the paramount consideration.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The "Exceptional skills" payments are discretionary and will be paid where the carer has been able to demonstrate caring skill and commitment "above and beyond" that has met a child or young person's needs and has achieved outcomes as determined by the child's care plan and placement plan
- 4.2 A single exceptional skills payment of £250 can be made for a child covering a three month period of outcomes achieved. If a second three months period of outcomes is achieved a new application and decision will be reached. The maximum payment for any single child in one year is therefore £1,000.
- 4.3 The annual cost of an in-house care placement under this policy will be £23,870 (including the maximum £1,000 additional exceptional skills payment) the average annual cost of an external foster care placement is £39,528. If, through the payment policy and training and support strategy, we are able to reduce the number of external foster care placements required we will cover these additional costs in savings from the reduction in external foster care provision and other associated cost with social work / IRO time and travel increased by external placements.

5. Background

This policy is reviewed annually to review payments for competitive best value

6. Additional Information

Shropshire Foster Carers Association have been consulted and agreed this revised payment policy.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information):

Key Decision: Yes

Included within Forward Plan: Yes

If a Key Decision and not included in the Forward Plan have the General Exception or Special Urgency Procedures been complied with: Yes/No

Name and Portfolio of Executive Member responsible for this area of responsibility:

Ann Hartley

Local Member:

Appendices:

Appendix A: Payment Arrangements for Foster Carers April 2015

Declaration of Interest

- I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed Date

NAME:

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR:

- I have to declare an interest in respect of this report

Signed Date

NAME:

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR:

(Note: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter.)

For the reasons set out in the report, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled

Signed

Portfolio Holder for

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and pro-forma is returned to Democratic Services for processing.

Additional comment :

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Note: If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive and the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (S151 Officer) and, if there are staffing implications the Head of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Portfolio Holder: Your decision will now be published and communicated to all Members of Council. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication.