

# REPORT FOR DECISION



<b>DECISION OF:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>10 JUNE 2015</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>FOSTER CARE PAYMENTS</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND CULTURE</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>ELIZABETH SHINGLER</b>
<b>TYPE OF DECISION:</b>	<b>CABINET KEY DECISION</b>
<b>FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:</b>	<b>THIS PAPER IS WITHIN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN</b>
<b>SUMMARY:</b>	<p>This paper addresses changes to the foster care payment system. It addresses 3 main issues:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. To afforded Family &amp; Friends carers the opportunity to qualify for the payment of the fostering fee</b></li></ol> <p>Currently family and friends who are approved as foster carers are paid the fostering allowance but are not paid a fostering fee which is reserved to 'mainstream carers' as a reward for opening their homes to unrelated children. A High Court judgement ruled against this sort of differentiation and Local Authorities are now required to ensure that any fee or 'reward element' of a payment system must be open to all carers.</p> <p>It was, therefore, necessary to develop new criteria for the payment of a fee. It is proposed that this is best done by the introduction of a payment for training and skill development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>2. To promote training and development for foster carers</b></li></ol> <p>Previously all carers who were approved to take unrelated children received the full fee on taking their</p>

	<p>first placement. In future it is proposed that on taking a first placement a fee that is equivalent to 50% of the full fee will be paid in recognition of having completed the 'Skills to Foster' training with the other 50% of the fee being earned by completing induction training. The full fee would be maintained thereafter by undertaking regular training that consolidated developed skills and knowledge. Those wishing not to undertake this level of training would remain on the 50% fee level.</p> <p>This Payment for Skills system would be open to all carers and would thereby not only comply with the High Court ruling but incentivise training and development.</p> <p><b>3. To put in place an enhanced fee to underpin the development of a specialist foster care scheme</b></p> <p>The Fostering Service have identified a need and an opportunity to recruit and develop a small group of foster carers who would be trained and supported to offer placements to young people who have multiple and complex needs and who are likely to be otherwise placed in Independent Fostering Agency placements or residential homes. A 'team around the child' approach would be taken.</p> <p>The fee paid to these carers would recognise their specialist skills that would be developed through an extensive training and development programme and their availability to the young person.</p> <p>The full details of the scheme are set out in the attached paper</p>
<p><b>OPTIONS &amp; RECOMMENDED OPTION</b></p>	<p><b>1. Maintain the status quo</b></p> <p>This is not recommended as it would not comply with the High Court ruling on payments to Family &amp; Friends Foster Carers and leave the Local Authority open to Judicial Review. Training and development would not be incentivised. The specialist scheme could not be developed</p> <p><b>2. Maintain the current payment system and include all Family &amp; Friends Foster Carers</b></p> <p>This would comply with the High Court ruling but would be expensive without adding value to the fostering service, as training and development would not be incentivised</p> <p><b>3. Introduce the new payment for skills without developing the specialist foster care scheme</b></p>

	<p>This would be compliant and would add value to the service as training and development would be incentivised but the service would not have the opportunity to try to maintain young people with multiple and complex needs in Bury.</p> <p><b>4. Introduce the new payment scheme in full</b></p> <p>This would address all 3 issues in that it would assure compliance, incentivise training &amp; development and allow the development of the specialist scheme</p> <p>It is recommended that option 3 or 4 be approved</p>
<p><b>IMPLICATIONS:</b></p>	<p>A consultation period with foster carers would be required</p> <p>A new rolling, training programme for carers would be introduced to ensure that carers are able to progress through the fee structure within agreed timescales.</p> <p>Recruitment of specialist carers would commence</p> <p><b>Financial Implications</b></p> <p>It is estimated that the additional annual on-going costs of the Family and Friends Foster Carers could be as much as £35,000.</p> <p>The proposed Specialist Foster Carers will lead to significant savings of approx £20,000 per placement and should cover the above additional costs.</p>
<p><b>Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:</b></p>	<p>Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes</p>
<p><b>Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:</b></p>	<p>There are two financial consequences to this report;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Additional payments to Family &amp; Friends Foster Cares could incur additional costs up to £35,000.</li> <li>2) The proposed use Specialist Foster Carers could lead to savings of up to £20,000 <u>per placement.</u></li> </ol> <p>If both elements of the report are approved, the proposals are expected to be self-financing, relieving pressure on the Children’s Social Care budget, and ultimately delivering better care outcomes.</p> <p>Following the High Court judgement on payments to Family and Friends Foster Carers, there is a significant financial risk to the Council if the payments to these Carers are not adopted.</p>



and the development of specialist skills aimed at increasing placement stability and a higher standard of care.

### **1.3 Introduction of professional foster carers as alternative to IFA placements**

The Invest to Save initiative has had a positive impact on increased recruitment and in-house occupancy levels, which supported by the work of the placement panel and a more flexible placement strategy has reduced the number of IFA placements. To further manage and reduce the number of IFA placements it is proposed to recruit up to 10 professional foster carers over a 2 year period. Professional foster carers would receive additional training and support and be paid a salary in addition to the age related child allowance.

### **1.4 Financial implications**

#### **1.4.1 Family and Friends Foster Carers**

The additional cost of complying with the High Court judgement for payments to Family and Friends Foster Carers is dependent upon the take-up of family and friends carers of the regular and on-going training.

Currently there are 38 Family and Friends placements and 27 are going to continue as foster placements, of which these will be entitled to access the new training payment for skills scheme.

It is estimated that no more than 50% of the Family and Friends Foster Carers will undertake the training and therefore only these will receive the additional payment.

Subsequently the potential additional annual cost will be approximately £35,000, which will be funded by on-going savings from within the Children's Agency budget as a result of the development of the Specialist Foster Carers Scheme (see below).

#### **1.4.2 Specialist Foster Carers Scheme**

This scheme will incur additional costs in increased payments to these professional Foster Carers. These additional payments will be outweighed by significant savings in reduced placements with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and in some instances in very expensive residential accommodation, which can range between £2,000 and £5,000 per week.

The proposed 'Professional Payment and Allowances' would be £26,000 per placement per year, while the average payment for an IFA placement is £46,000 per year, thereby reducing costs by £20,000 per placement.

It is proposed that 10 professional salaried Foster Carers be recruited over the next 2 years, with a recruitment campaign continuing in future years. If these levels are achieved then there could be a potential £200,000 saving occurring in 2016/17.

## **2.0 ISSUES**

Equality and Diversity

Overwhelmingly children within the care system come from families in the lower socio-economic groups; the overall, intended impact of the scheme is to improve the care given to these children to improve their wellbeing and life-chances.

The opportunity for Family & Friends carers to undertake training and thereby qualify for the fostering fee provides additional income to families who are often in the lower socio-economic groups.

The opportunity of training promotes learning and development for foster carers who, national research shows, generally have poor education attainment

The introduction of the specialist fostering scheme provides opportunities for very vulnerable young people to receive a high level of support in all aspects of their lives with the intention of promoting emotional well-being, social, education and training opportunities and a reduction in offending opportunities thereby keeping them out of the criminal justice system.

The scheme also provides economic opportunities for those working on the scheme

### **3.0 CONCLUSION**

The introduction of the full Payment for Skills scheme would allow the Fostering Service to move forward in updating its approach to the training and development of foster carers, make it compliant with High Court Ruling and provide an opportunity to keep more young people within the Borough in order that they might benefit from a tightly co-ordinated care plan and a well supported placement.

---

#### **List of Background Papers:-**

Foster Carer Payment for Skills (attached)

#### **Contact Details:-**

Elizabeth Shingler  
0161 253 6075

## **Foster Carer Payment for Skills**

### **Background**

The review of foster carer payments in Bury is driven by three key factors:

- The need to incentivise training for foster carers to ensure a higher level of compliance with regulations and the professionalization and modernisation of the service
- The development of a fairer payment and reward system which recognises the importance of the contribution made by family and friends foster carers and to ensure all foster carers are rewarded on the basis of their skills and contribution to the care of children
- The establishment of a payment and reward structure that provides an opportunity for the development of skills and specialisation in areas of current unmet need such as older teenage children with more challenging behaviours currently placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs)

Following discussion with the fostering service managers and a development day held with the full team, a subgroup was established to streamline the training programme to provide greater access to a core induction training programme which would need to be completed within 6 months of approval by the fostering panel to ensure payment of the full fee. This would apply equally to all newly approved foster carers including those approved as family and friends carers.

### **Training for Skills**

The proposed new training and payment scheme applies to all new foster carers completing the pre approval skills to foster training and subsequently approved by the fostering panel. On approval and at first placement a foster carer would receive the current age related boarding out allowance, ranging from £122.00 to £179.00 per week plus 50% of the current age related fee ranging from £55 to £60 per week per child.

On completion of the induction skills training programme and a satisfactory first review the foster carer would receive the full fee payment. A foster carer review would be held 6 months after approval and subsequent annual reviews would need to include a review of the fee element to ensure continued payment of the full fee. It is a regulatory requirement that all foster carers should complete the Training Standards Development (TSD) Workbook. If foster carers fail to complete the TSD within 18 months of initial approval the fee will reduce to 50% of the full fee until such time as the TSD work book is completed and signed off. Equally should approved foster carers fail to complete the consolidation training within the prescribed time scale the fee will be reduced by 50%.

The revised training programme for approved foster carers comprises 3 distinct training elements;

- **Induction training**
- **Consolidation training**
- **Specialist Training**

The training programme has been revised to provide regular **induction** skills training which will run on a 5/6 monthly cycle to ensure foster carers are given the opportunity to develop their skills and have the incentive to receive the additional fee payment before their 6 monthly review.

The induction skills training will consist of the following training modules:

- Safeguarding children and young people and E Safety
- First Aid
- Record keeping
- Promoting Contact
- Food Handling and Hygiene

Following the first 6 monthly review the following **consolidation** training must be completed to ensure maintenance of the full fee payment: The consolidation module is based around competencies which support and underpin the TSD workbook learning.

- Valuing Diversity
- Child Development
- Memory Books
- TSD Training Workbook

The foster carer will be expected to complete the TSD Workbook within 18 months of approval and by the time of their second annual review for the full fee payment to be maintained.

### **Developing Skills and Specialisation**

Supervision and annual reviews should focus on developing the foster carer's skills and widening their experience and intervention skills. Further training opportunities will be made available on an annual basis to enable the development of specialist areas of intervention which may be able to form the basis for a small group of specialist foster carers taking more difficult to manage placements. (Professional Foster Carers) It is recognised that some foster carers enter fostering with considerable experience of looking after children in a professional capacity and in these cases prior accredited learning will be taken into consideration in determining the payment for skills and developing their individual training and development programme.

Many such training opportunities can be accessed through Bury Children's Safeguarding Board and includes:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Domestic Violence
- Parental Drugs and substance misuse
- Teenage Pregnancy
- Safeguarding children
- Adult mental health

The Fostering Changes Training has proven effective in equipping foster carers with a better understanding of the factors triggering difficult behaviour in some children and young people. The service needs to ensure that this training is targeted at those



carers able to use these skills and put them into practice. The training will not be provided unless foster carers have completed induction training and TSD Workbook.

Other specialist training can be provided through expertise within children's services and would include CAMHS, Health and Education making significant contributions especially in respect of Professional Foster Carers.

The following training would also be available to foster carers and would need to be identified through a more robust review process which has a focus on the development of skills:

- Promoting Education
- Contact and working with birth families
- Recording and keeping safe
- Child development and attachment
- The health of looked after children
- Emotional health of looked after children
- Aspects of Autism
- Anti bullying strategies
- Extra Mile

### **Proposed Allowances and Skills Payments based on current 2014 Bury rates**

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Skills Payment</b>	<b>Allowance</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>0 – 4 years</b>	-	<b>122.00</b>	<b>122.00</b>
<b>5 – 10 years</b>	-	<b>134.00</b>	<b>134.00</b>
<b>11 – 15 years</b>	-	<b>154.00</b>	<b>154.00</b>
<b>16 plus</b>	-	<b>179.00</b>	<b>179.00</b>
<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Skills Payment</b>	<b>Allowance</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>0 – 4 years</b>	<b>55.00 (36.85)</b>	<b>122.00</b>	<b>177.00</b>
<b>5 – 10 years</b>	<b>55.00 (36.85)</b>	<b>134.00</b>	<b>189.00</b>
<b>11 – 15 years</b>	<b>60.00 (40.20)</b>	<b>154.00</b>	<b>214.00</b>
<b>16 plus</b>	<b>60.00 (40.20)</b>	<b>179.00</b>	<b>239.00</b>
<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Skills Payment</b>	<b>Allowance</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>0 – 4 years</b>	<b>110.00 (77.00)</b>	<b>122.00</b>	<b>232.00</b>
<b>5 – 10 years</b>	<b>110.00 (77.00)</b>	<b>134.00</b>	<b>244.00</b>
<b>11 – 15 years</b>	<b>120.00 (84.00)</b>	<b>154.00</b>	<b>274.00</b>
<b>16 plus</b>	<b>120.00 (84.00)</b>	<b>179.00</b>	<b>299.00</b>
<b>Group 4 Professional Carers</b>	<b>Weekly Skills Payment</b>	<b>Allowance</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>0 – 4 years</b>	<b>346.00</b>	<b>122.00</b>	<b>466.00</b>
<b>5 – 10 years</b>	<b>346.00</b>	<b>134.00</b>	<b>480.00</b>
<b>11 – 15 years</b>	<b>346.00</b>	<b>154.00</b>	<b>500.00</b>
<b>16 plus</b>	<b>346.00</b>	<b>179.00</b>	<b>525.00</b>

\*Subsequent children subject to 30 % Reduction in skill payment shown in brackets.

## **Operating a Skill Based Foster Carer Payment Scheme**

The payment for skills scheme will apply to local authority foster carers who care for children not previously known to them (General Foster Carers) and to Family and Friends (connected persons) who care for specific children where generally there is some form of established relationship or connection. Payments to both groups of foster carers will be subject to the carer meeting the criteria outlined below for the relevant group payment. A foster carer's position within a payment group will be subject to annual review through the Fostering Regulations Review process and will take account of the skills, training and criteria detailed for each specific payment group. All skilled based assessments will be based on evidence provided in the carer's portfolio, annual review and the fostering team's assessment.

### **Progressing through the payment for skills scheme**

Foster carers may progress through the payment groups by acquiring the relevant skills, evidence and qualifications. Any carer wishing to move to a higher group should notify their supervising social worker in writing attaching the evidence to support their application. In determining the length of fostering experience the date of first placement will be the starting point of measurement rather than the date of approval at the fostering panel.

Upon receipt of the application the supervising social worker will undertake a skill based assessment using the criteria outlined below in the payment group guidance. The assessment should be completed within 4 weeks of receipt of the written request from the carer. If the application is successful the increase in payment will commence from the date of receipt of the written request from the carer should there be a child or young person in placement.

In relation to group 3 and 4 the fostering team manager and strategic lead will consider the annual review of group 3 carers in terms of their group payments and approve any applications for group 4 carers on the professional scheme following their assessment.

If an application to progress through the payments scheme is not supported by the supervising social worker and relevant manager, the foster carer will have a right to appeal this decision. If appropriate the appeal should be considered by the strategic lead or through representation to the fostering panel. The same process will apply should a foster carer be moved down a payment group following annual review of their group payment status. Bury fostering service reserve the right to move a foster carer to a lower group where the foster carer is considered responsible for not continuing to meet the requirements of their payment group. Examples may include non attendance at training/development events identified through supervision and ceasing to contribute to the fostering service such as withdrawing from a mentoring role or from recruitment events.

It is possible under certain circumstances for foster carers to commence their fostering career in group 3 or 4 of the scheme. Foster carers who have previously been employed in a registered or regulated child care setting with direct responsibility for the day to day care of children may be considered suitable to be placed in group 3 or 4 if all of the other relevant criteria for the group are met. This employment needs to have been for a minimum of 2 years and no more than 5 years previous to their approval as a foster carer.

Foster carers who have been previously approved by a registered fostering agency and have fostered children for a period of 2 years or more may also be considered suitable to be placed in group 3 or 4 of the payment scheme should all the relevant criteria of the payment group be met. The fostering experience will need to have ended no more than 5 years previous to their approval as a Bury foster carer.

## **Criteria for skill payment groups**

### **Group 1 foster carers comprise:**

- Foster carers caring for children not previously known to them, have attended skills to foster training, successfully completed a full competency based assessment and have been approved through the fostering panel and by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) but who fail to complete their induction training within 6 months of approval will move into Group 1.
- Family and friends foster carers who are caring for a specific child and are in the process of completing a competency based assessment (Regulation 24 of Fostering Regulations)
- Family and friends foster carers who have completed a full competency based assessment but not wishing to progress further through the skill payment scheme.

All Group 1 foster carers must evidence and demonstrate the following minimum skills

### **Caring for Children**

- An ability to provide a good standard of care to other people's children which promotes healthy emotional, physical and sexual development as well as their health and education achievement
- An ability to work closely with children's families and others who are important to the child
- An ability to set appropriate boundaries and manage children's behaviour within these, without the use of physical or other inappropriate punishment
- Knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen to and communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding

### **Providing a Safe Environment**

- An ability to ensure the children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm and abuse
- An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm and abuse and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened

### **Working as part of a Team**

- An ability to work with other professional people and contribute to the department's planning for the child/young person
- An ability to communicate effectively
- An ability to keep information confidential
- An ability to promote equality, diversity and the rights of individuals and groups within society

### **Own Development**

- An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected themselves and their families and the impact that fostering is likely to have on them all
- To have access to people and links in the community to provide support in the fostering task
- A willingness to undertake training and improve personal skills
- An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress

### **Group 2 foster carers comprise:**

- Foster carers, who have successfully completed a competency based assessment, are approved by the fostering panel and ADM, have completed the Skills to Foster training and have enrolled to complete the induction training course. The induction training should be completed within 6 months of approval by the fostering panel and ADM unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Foster carers who do not wish to progress further through the skills based scheme following completion of their induction training
- Foster carers who meet the criteria for group 1 foster carers and have undertaken any training specified at the point of approval or subsequently through supervision or annual review which is identified as necessary by the supervising social worker
- Foster carers who have attended a minimum of 50% of support group meetings

### **Group 3 Foster carers comprise:**

- Foster carers who meet the relevant criteria for groups 1 and 2 and have successfully completed the induction training course including
  - Safeguarding children and young people and E safety
  - First aid
  - Record keeping
  - Promoting contact
  - Food handling and hygiene
- Foster carers must complete the consolidation training modules within 6 months of completing the induction training (within 12 months of approval by the fostering panel and ADM) to maintain their group 3 payment status the modules include
  - Valuing diversity
  - Child development
  - Memory books
  - TSD training workbook
- Foster carers who have a minimum of 2 years previous fostering or residential child care experience within the last 5 years
- Foster carers who have undertaken training specified at the point of approval or subsequently through supervision and annual review
- Foster carers who have completed a successful annual review
- Foster carers who have or can demonstrate the following key skills in addition to those required for Group 1 and 2
  - An ability to help children develop appropriate behaviour helping them to become more independent and enabling them to cope with their emotions as appropriate to their age and ability
  - An ability to help children to develop basic aspects of memory thinking, imagination and manipulative skills through play etc

- An ability to help children develop their language skills and self expression
- An ability to help children learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour without resorting to physical punishment.
- To manage children's negative reactions and unacceptable behaviour by encouraging positive behaviour patterns within the requirements of current fostering policy
- An ability to plan and prepare an appropriate routine which balances the child's needs for security, stability and emotional warmth
- An ability to respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect
- An ability to observe and assess a child's development and record accurately
- To act as an advocate for children and ensure personal practice is anti discriminatory and respects all children and their families

It is an expectation of the fostering service that Group 3 foster carers are able to offer their skills in some of the areas below to help to develop the service

- To help children and families cope with loss and bereavement – this may be due to a life threatening illness, separation through adoption or loss of their family
- To work closely with other professionals, with appropriate support and supervision, in carrying out individual therapeutic programmes, skills development, behaviour modification or supporting education programmes for children and young people
- A willingness to assist in the recruitment of other foster carers
- A willingness to participate in the training of foster carers
- A willingness to support other foster carers by acting as a mentor or buddy

#### **Group 4 Foster carers – Professional Foster carers**

- The primary approved foster carer will not be engaged in any other form of paid employment
- Where there are 2 approved foster carers in a household partnership there is an expectation that both will be actively involved in providing care for and supporting the young person in placement
- Generally children placed will be aged 13 plus and will have the involvement of a number of child care professionals
- Initially at placement no other LAC children should be in placement
- In addition to meeting the criteria for groups 1 to 3 Professional Foster carers will be expected to meet the following additional criteria
  - An ability to care for children assessed as presenting behaviour which may cause significant management problems
  - Maintain a knowledge and awareness of current legislation, current issues in child care and best practice developments
- To help achieve these goals professional Foster carers will complete the following additional training
  - Fostering changes training
  - Attachment and loss and trauma training
  - Supporting education and achievement
  - Working with professionals in a team

- Substance misuse
- Managing challenging behaviour
- In addition to the 8 key skills required for Group 3 foster carers, Group 4 Professional Foster carers must be able to demonstrate competency in the areas highlighted below
  - To help children cope with loss, trauma and bereavement
  - Working closely with a range of professionals in carrying out therapeutic programmes, education support programmes and other individual interventions with appropriate professional support and supervision
  - To take responsibility for individual programmes of skill development for children and work with them and their families and other professionals to achieve the goals of the programme
  - To work pro actively, where appropriate to return children to live with their families by developing positive relationships with birth families and undertake supervised contact visits
  - A willingness to assist with the recruitment and training of prospective foster carers
  - To act as a mentor or buddy to other foster carers where appropriate
  - To attend and participate in professional meetings.