

**Decision Session Executive Member for
Children, Young People and Education**

15 October 2019

Report of the Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services

REPORT ON REVIEW OF FOSTER CARERS UPLIFT

Summary

1. The report outlines the independent review into the decision to remove the annual City of York foster carer uplift.
2. The Executive Member is asked agree the independent recommendations.

Recommendations

3. As the review was comprehensive, considered best practice and was independent, officers are in agreement with recommendations as outlined below:
 - i. The council to set out a clear framework for consultation and communication on future decisions on uplifts, fees and allowances.
 - ii. The council and YAFCA (York Area Foster Carer Association) to agree a communications strategy to include future developments planned by the council, future consultations and clear channels for YAFCA to raise concerns.
 - iii. The council to consider implementing the uplift for 2019/20 for those foster carers on level one and two to strengthen the recruitment strategy.
 - iv. The council, in partnership with YAFCA, to host an annual conference for foster carers.

- v. YAFCA to consider how as an organisation it can reach all foster carers to offer support and positive working relationships with the council.
- vi. The council to consider non-monetary awards for long standing foster carers.

Reason: To ensure that independent best practice is followed.

Background

4. A decision was made in January 2019 to remove the alignment of the annual foster carer fee uplift with the annual salary uplift for City of York Children Social Worker staff. This decision resulted in the removal of the foster carer fee uplift.
5. The decision was reached as the result of seeking to invest in an enhanced training and support package for City of York foster carers and to maintain current foster carer fee payments. This is in a national and local context of local authority budgetary constraints.
6. After representation in June 2019 by YAFCA Amanda Hatton Director CEC agreed an independent review of this decision. The terms of reference for the review were to consider any link between:
 1. fee uplift and placement stability
 2. fee uplift and foster carer recruitment
 3. fee uplift and foster carer retention
 4. fee uplift monies being redirected into foster carer training

Consultation

7. The independent consultant undertook a range of consultation activities which included:
 - Receiving papers from the Local Authority including information on training, current fees, numbers of carers and numbers of children Looked After by the Local Authority.
 - Receiving papers from YAFCA including extracts from the relevant council committees which set out the fees and

uplifts over a number of years (Appendix 3)

- Looking at a range of other Local Authorities' fees and payments arrangements in addition to the Fostering Network information on fees paid across the country in 2017.
- Meeting with the managers of the service, the Assistant Director and the Director of Children's Services.
- Meeting with representatives of YAFCA and held two drop-in sessions to consult with individual foster carers.
- Telephone discussions with 25 foster carers. Ten carers' details were provided by the Local Authority and ten by YAFCA. All YAFCA committee members were contacted. The majority of foster carers who were consulted were at Advanced level and had been foster carers for a number of years.

Options

8. The options are:
 - a) to adopt the independent recommendations in full
 - b) to adopt the independent recommendations in part
 - c) not to adopt the independent recommendations
9. The Corporate Director Children, Education and Communities and Sophie Wales Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services are in agreement with Option a) adopting the independent recommendations in full.

Analysis

10. The report by the Independent Consultant is assessed as being fair, reasonable and proportionate. It is considered to be measured and its recommendations will strengthen fee payment across the fee payment levels for foster carers.

Council Plan

11. A focus on Front Line Services

Implications

12. The implications are as follows:

- Human Resources (HR) - There are no HR implications.
- Financial - Adding a 2% uplift to levels 1 & 2 would give the following changes:

Level	Proposed Rate	Difference per carer per annum	Difference for total level 1 and level 2 carers per annum
2	£173.55	+£174.64	+£1,592
1	£66.08	+£66.35	+£1,991
Total per annum for both levels			+£3,583

Risk Management

13. The City of York foster carer fees budget is overspending by +£74k in 2019/20 (Budget £1,161k) due to the current fostering placements. The additional cost of £3.5k would be added to this overspend.

Contact Details

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Corporate Director Children, Education
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Report **Date** 9.10.10
Approved

Specialist Implications Officer(s) List information for all

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Appendix 1- Report on Review of Foster Carers Uplift by Audrey
Williamson