

**City of York Council**  
**Equalities Impact Assessment**

**Who is submitting the proposal?**

<b>Directorate:</b>		Children’s Services and Education	
<b>Service Area:</b>		Fostering	
<b>Name of the proposal:</b>		Introduction of new Fostering Fee Framework	
<b>Lead officer:</b>		Bob Webb - Lead Member Children Services and Education	
<b>Date assessment completed:</b>		05/12/2024	
<b>Names of those who contributed to the assessment:</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Job title</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Job title</b>
Michael Cavan	Head of Resources	Dawn Atkin	Service Manager - Fostering

## Step 1 – Aims and intended outcomes.

<b>1.1</b>	<b>What is the purpose of the proposal?</b> Please explain your proposal in Plain English avoiding acronyms and jargon.
	<p>The purpose of the proposal is to improve the skills fee payment we make to Foster Carers, for the care and support they provide to children and young people they look after. Introducing this new fee structure will ensure it is fair for all foster carers and addresses the disparity in fees that has been identified through our service review. This new fee structure will ensure we remain competitive and attractive in our recruitment of new carers, in a very challenging landscape. The recruitment of new foster carers is a key priority for children's services.</p>
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Are there any external considerations?</b> (Legislation/government directive/codes of practice etc.)
	<p>The Local Authority has a statutory duty under section (22G) Children Act 1989, to provide sufficient homes to meet the needs of children who are being looked after. The City of York fostering service is committed to providing these homes and care arrangements close to their families, schools and connected networks.</p> <p>The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards, as amended, provide a clear framework for Fostering Service Providers, Foster Carers and associated staff with regard to how fostering services should be delivered, how foster carers should be assessed and what foster carers can expect to receive by way of support. These Regulations and Standards are used by OFSTED when inspecting fostering service providers and when inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS).</p> <p>Skills fee payments are made to foster carers on top of the child allowances, to recognise their time, skills, and experience. These fees are agreed and set at a local level for local authorities and independent fostering agencies (IFA's). Our fees and any additional payments made to foster carers, the processes by which these are administered and paid are outlined in City of York, Fostering Fees and Payments booklet.</p>

1.3	<b>Who are the stakeholders and what are their interests?</b>
	<p><b>The key stakeholders are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children in Care and their Families.</li> <li>• Foster Carers</li> <li>• The council and elected members</li> </ul> <p><b>Secondary stake holders include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities</li> <li>• Education (schools, colleges, and universities)</li> <li>• Health services</li> </ul> <p>As Corporate Parents, it is in all our interests to ensure that children and young people who need to be looked after in a foster care arrangement are close to their families, school, friends and wider connected network.</p>
1.4	<b>What results/outcomes do we want to achieve and for whom?</b> This section should explain what outcomes you want to achieve for service users, staff and/or the wider community. Demonstrate how the proposal links to the Council Plan (2019- 2023) and other corporate strategies and plans.
	<p><b>Our Ambition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City of York has a thriving fostering service, which is able to provide a range of appropriate care arrangements for children and young people in care.</li> <li>• We have a strong financial offer that attracts those considering fostering, so we are able to recruit enough carers to meet our sufficiency duties.</li> <li>• Foster carers feel rewarded and valued and commit to fostering for York long term, providing stability to the service.</li> </ul> <p><b>Our Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing our recruitment strategy; comprising of enhanced digital marketing, new website and improved offer will increase the number of in-house foster carers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing our need to commission external foster care provision and therefore reducing our spend on privately commissioned care arrangements.</li> </ul> <p><b>How will we know this is making a difference?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More children and young people are living in City of York fostering care arrangements which are close to their families, friends, school, and connected networks.</li> <li>We have more foster carers that enable us to better match children's needs, with the skills and expertise of suitable foster carers.</li> <li>Children and young people will experience a stable home life, where they are succeeding in education and receive consistent support with their health.</li> </ul>
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## Step 2 – Gathering the information and feedback

<b>2.1</b>	<b>What sources of data, evidence and consultation feedback do we have to help us understand the impact of the proposal on equality rights and human rights?</b> Please consider a range of sources, including: consultation exercises, surveys, feedback from staff, stakeholders, participants, research reports, the views of equality groups, as well your own experience of working in this area etc.	
	<b>Source of data/supporting evidence</b>	<b>Reason for using</b>
	Children and Young People	We have worked with care experienced children and young people in designing this skills and fee matrix and continue to work together on developing our overall fostering offer.
	Foster Carers	Foster carers have participated in and contributed to the development of this proposal, recognising the need for the fee structure to be revised to ensure fairness, equity, and competitiveness in attracting new carers.
	Fostering Social Work Staff	Fostering social work staff have participated in and contributed to the development of this proposal. Those workers involved in the recruitment and assessment of new carers recognise the need to improve and strengthen our overall fostering offer.

Example of other local authorities	We have benchmarked our fees and structure against 12 other local and neighbouring authorities. We paid the second lowest entry level fee; our highest fee was competitive with other authorities. However, other local authorities had a much fairer progression / overall fee structure.
Ofsted	National data shows that the number of children entering care is increasing, whilst the number of available foster carers being approved is reducing. There is considered to be a national crisis in relation to the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

### Step 3 – Gaps in data and knowledge

3.1	<b>What are the main gaps in information and understanding of the impact of your proposal? Please indicate how any gaps will be dealt with.</b>	
<b>Gaps in data or knowledge</b>		<b>Action to deal with this</b>
No known gaps in data or knowledge.		n/a

### Step 4 – Analysing the impacts or effects.

4.1	<b>Please consider what the evidence tells you about the likely impact (positive or negative) on people sharing a protected characteristic, i.e. how significant could the impacts be if we did not make any adjustments? Remember the duty is also positive – so please identify where the proposal offers opportunities to promote equality and/or foster good relations.</b>		
<b>Equality Groups and Human Rights.</b>	<b>Key Findings/Impacts</b>	<b>Positive (+) Negative (-) Neutral (0)</b>	<b>High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)</b>
<b>Age</b>	The purpose of the proposal is to improve stability and secure good outcomes for children and young people in	+	H

	care. The successful delivery of the proposal should directly deliver positive outcomes across all ages and to both foster carers and children and young people.		
<b>Disability</b>	The proposal is inclusive of all children in care and foster carers, including those who are disabled. The positive impact of the proposal will include this group of people.	+	M
<b>Gender</b>	The proposal does not exclude different genders or reinforce gender biases and will have a positive impact across all genders.	+	M
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	The proposal is inclusive of all children in care and foster carers, including those who identify as non-binary, or a gender other than the one assigned at birth. Delivered well the proposal will have a positive impact.	+	M
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	The proposal is not expected to impact on this characteristic.	0	
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	The proposal is not expected to impact on this characteristic.	0	
<b>Race</b>	The proposal is inclusive of all children in care and foster carers, regardless of race. Delivered well the proposal will have a positive impact, especially on those already at risk of multiple forms of discrimination.	+	M
<b>Religion and belief</b>	The proposal is not expected to impact on this characteristic.	0	
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	The proposal is inclusive of all children in care and foster carers of all sexual orientations. The positive impact of the proposal will include this group.	+	M
<b>Other Socio-economic groups including :</b>	<b>Could other socio-economic groups be affected e.g. carers, ex-offenders, low incomes?</b>		

<b>Carer</b>	This proposal could strengthen support for children in care and those people that care for them.	+	M
<b>Low income groups</b>	This proposal should help towards providing stable homes and stability in education, improving life chances.	+	M
<b>Veterans, Armed Forces Community</b>	The proposal is not expected to impact on this characteristic.	0	
<b>Other</b>			
<b>Impact on human rights:</b>			
List any human rights impacted.	<p>The proposal directly impacts several children's rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right to Education (Article 28)</li> <li>• Right to Non-Discrimination (Article 2)</li> <li>• Right to Life, Survival, and Development (Article 6)</li> <li>• Right to Be Heard (Article 12)</li> <li>• Right to Play, Leisure, and Cultural Activities (Article 31)</li> <li>• Right to Health (Article 24)</li> <li>• Right to Protection from Violence (Article 19)</li> <li>• Right to an Adequate Standard of Living (Article 27)</li> <li>• Right to Privacy (Article 16)</li> <li>• Right to Special Protection and Assistance (Article 20)</li> <li>• Right to Access Information (Article 17)</li> <li>• Right to Freedom of Expression (Article 13)</li> <li>• Right to Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly (Article 15)</li> </ul>	+	H

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right to Education on Human Rights and Peace (Article 29)</li> </ul>		
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**Use the following guidance to inform your responses:**

Indicate:

- Where you think that the proposal could have a POSITIVE impact on any of the equality groups like promoting equality and equal opportunities or improving relations within equality groups
- Where you think that the proposal could have a NEGATIVE impact on any of the equality groups, i.e. it could disadvantage them
- Where you think that this proposal has a NEUTRAL effect on any of the equality groups listed below i.e. it has no effect currently on equality groups.

It is important to remember that a proposal may be highly relevant to one aspect of equality and not relevant to another.



<p><b>High impact</b> (The proposal or process is very equality relevant)</p>	<p>There is significant potential for or evidence of adverse impact The proposal is institution wide or public facing The proposal has consequences for or affects significant numbers of people The proposal has the potential to make a significant contribution to promoting equality and the exercise of human rights.</p>
<p><b>Medium impact</b> (The proposal or process is somewhat equality relevant)</p>	<p>There is some evidence to suggest potential for or evidence of adverse impact The proposal is institution wide or across services, but mainly internal The proposal has consequences for or affects some people The proposal has the potential to make a contribution to promoting equality and the exercise of human rights</p>
<p><b>Low impact</b> (The proposal or process might be equality relevant)</p>	<p>There is little evidence to suggest that the proposal could result in adverse impact The proposal operates in a limited way The proposal has consequences for or affects few people The proposal may have the potential to contribute to promoting equality and the exercise of human rights</p>

## Step 5 - Mitigating adverse impacts and maximising positive impacts

5.1	<b>Based on your findings, explain ways you plan to mitigate any unlawful prohibited conduct or unwanted adverse impact. Where positive impacts have been identified, what is been done to optimise opportunities to advance equality or foster good relations?</b>
<p>The assessment has found that there should be an overall positive impact from the implementation of the proposal. The proposal seeks to improve the overall financial support to foster carers, which will enhance our ability to recruit more skilled carers to look after our children and young people in York. This will help us to meet our sufficiency duties by providing a range of care arrangements. The proposal will equally have a direct positive impact on the lives of children and young people in care. Offering more choice to enable better matching, improved stability and children and young people being able to live closer to their families, friends and connected networks.</p>	

## Step 6 – Recommendations and conclusions of the assessment

6.1	<b>Having considered the potential or actual impacts you should be in a position to make an informed judgement on what should be done. In all cases, document your reasoning that justifies your decision. There are four main options you can take:</b>
<p>- <b>No major change to the proposal</b> – the EIA demonstrates the proposal is robust. There is no potential for unlawful discrimination or adverse impact and you have taken all opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations, subject to continuing monitor and review.</p>	

- **Adjust the proposal** – the EIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. This involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance quality or to foster good relations.
- **Continue with the proposal** (despite the potential for adverse impact) – you should clearly set out the justifications for doing this and how you believe the decision is compatible with our obligations under the duty.
- **Stop and remove the proposal** – if there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, you should consider stopping the proposal altogether. If a proposal leads to unlawful discrimination it should be removed or changed.

**Important:** If there are any adverse impacts you cannot mitigate, please provide a compelling reason in the justification column.

Option selected	Conclusions/justification
<b>No major change to the proposal</b>	The proposal has been developed in consultation with foster carers and fostering staff, whilst using previous consultation data provided by children and young people in care. This proposal will improve our overall offer to foster carers as well as strengthening our marketplace in recruiting new carers and competing with other local authorities and private providers.

## Step 7 – Summary of agreed actions resulting from the assessment

7.1	What action, by whom, will be undertaken as a result of the impact assessment.		
Impact/issue	Action to be taken	Person responsible	Timescale

8. 1	<p><b>How will the impact of your proposal be monitored and improved upon going forward?</b> Consider how will you identify the impact of activities on protected characteristics and other marginalised groups going forward? How will any learning and enhancements be capitalised on and embedded?</p>
	<p>The implementation of this proposal will be monitored through the existing KPI tracker, Corporate Parenting Board and DMT through the quarterly fostering report.</p> <p>We will continue to track and challenge the impact of this change and report progress through its annual Corporate Parenting Board report.</p>

## **Step 8 - Monitor, review and improve**