

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

**19 March 2019**

Report of the Corporate Director of Children, Education and  
Communities

**Placement Review**

**Summary**

1. This report provides an update and recommendations relating to the Placement Review which is focused on placement sufficiency for Children in Care.

**Recommendations**

2. Agree the new training, support and remuneration offer for Foster Carers, which takes into consideration Foster Carer consultation feedback. (Option 3).

**Background**

3. The aim of the Placement Review is to develop placement options that better meet the current and future need, offer value for money and improve outcomes for children in care.
4. Area of focus:
  - Foster Care – strengthening the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers by developing the training, support and remuneration offer
  - Residential provision and other sufficiency options which is not covered in this paper. This paper is likely to be taken to Executive in June 2019.

5. Placement sufficiency is at a critical stage in York. Despite the number of Children in Care remaining relatively stable over the previous three years, the diversity and complexity of placement requirement is changing. York's specific and unique sufficiency profile means increasingly Children's Social Care are in a position where they are unable to place children and young people in existing Council provision and are having to spot purchase, often at short notice, external / private foster or residential placements that are expensive and may not be value for money in the context of the individual child.
6. The 2018/19 budget for local Foster Carers is £1,483k, with a projected overspend for the year of £106k based on the current levels of foster placements. Doing nothing different at this stage presents a risk to the outcomes for individual children and young people in care, the Council's reputation and standing and continued budgetary overspend. Therefore we need to enhance our ability to recruit and retain foster carers.

## **Foster Care – Support, Training and Remuneration**

### **Consultation**

7. Foster Carers have been consulted for 30 days on the proposals in line with best practice HR principles. This has involved the following activities, numbers participated in brackets.
  - Discussion with York Area Foster Carers Association (YAFCA) (5)
  - Written briefing document containing all proposals (90)
  - Information meeting (25)
  - 4 small focus group discussions (16)
  - Designated inbox for email feedback (10)
  - Offer of individual meetings (none taken up)
8. A number of different consultation approaches were used to ensure that a diverse range of feedback was obtained from Foster Carers.

The diversity and level of engagement from Foster Carers was positive and higher than other previous, similar exercises. Feedback from Foster Carers focused on the following themes:

- **Values** – Foster carers stressed the importance of a value based approach to Foster Care
- **Training and support** – Foster Carers welcomed the increased new training opportunities, requested consideration given to Foster Carers co delivering training and agreed greater clarity is needed around expectation of attendance
- **Normalising /equity** – Foster Carers recognised the importance of managing budgets and being equitable and transparent across fees, in order to normalise the experience for children in Foster Care.

*‘We need to manage budgets and expectations for children in care, this helps for setting them up for independence’.*

- **Delegated Authority payment** – Foster Carers were positive about the delegated Authority budget, but raised valid questions about how this would be paid and what it should be used for.

*‘Guidance of what to spend allowances on is really helpful for new Foster Carers’*

- **Foster Carer levels** – Foster Carer identified that the simplification of the different levels has resulted in more clarity. Implementation of this needs to consider how carers move up and down

*‘The different Foster Carer levels are clear. This helps me understand what I can do and offer and where I want to be’*

- **Mileage** – Foster Carers fed back that our proposal was unclear, could adversely impact carers who live outside of York and could increase the request for use of taxis for transporting children in care.

*'I know it is important to cover costs, but the real focus needs to be children's needs in a family and how we can best support them'*

9. Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM- Children in Care Council) have been consulted on the broad themes of the Placement Review. The clearest message was

*'Training and support for Foster Carers is the most important'*

10. Other areas that SMTIM highlighted that were important include:
- Relationships between Carers and children and young people
  - Understanding the needs of children and young people today – and the changes particularly relating to social media, interests and hobbies
  - Mandatory mental health training
  - Treating children and young people in placement and birth children equally. If you get this right children and young people would receive the right support.

## **Options**

11. There are following options relating to Foster Care training, support and remuneration.
1. Do nothing to the current Foster Carer arrangement for training, support and remuneration
  2. Implement the new offer with no changes – See Annex A for detail of the training, support and remuneration offer.
  3. Implement the new offer taking into consideration Foster Carer feedback. See Annex B for *You Said, We did* changes that have been made based on Feedback.

## **Analysis**

- 12.1 Option 1 will result in no change in the ability to recruit and retain Foster Carers and will mean the outcomes of the Placement Review outlined in Annex C will not be achieved.
- 12.2 Option 2 will deliver the outcomes of the Placement Review but may alienate Foster Carers that may feel the Local Authority has not given due weight and consideration to their views and suggestions
- 12.3 Option 3 will deliver the outcomes of the Placement Review and help to ensure Foster Carers feel valued and have a sense of ownership of the new offer. Some reputational risk remains in that a small number of foster carers may not agree with the new offer.

## 13. Proposals directly relate to following Council Priority

- A focus on frontline services - to ensure all residents, particularly the least advantaged, can access reliable services and community facilities

## **Implications**

### **Financial**

#### **Foster Care**

14. The 2018/19 budget for local Foster Carers is £1,483k, with a projected overspend for the year of £106k based on the current levels of foster placements. If the proposed changes to the Foster Care allowances as set out at Annex B are approved then it is estimated that this would add £24k pa to the current level of expenditure (i.e increase the on-going overspend to £130k based on existing placement numbers). For 2019/20 this will be funded by an additional £130k allocation of resources from the £800k Children's Services growth included in the council's budget proposals.

15. The rationale behind the proposed changes is to retain and recruit additional local Foster Carers in order to reduce the number of children that need to be placed out of city. As the cost of out of city placements is on average significantly more expensive than a local foster placement, if successful, the proposal should over time reduce the overall costs for supporting any given cohort of Looked After Children.
16. There is a task and finish group approach focused on reviewing and refreshing our fostering recruitment strategy and processes. The outcome of this is that the CYC recruitment strategy is being refocused into website and digital campaign and work around this will be the subject of future papers.
17. We continue to be an active participant of You Can Foster- a regional approach to foster carer recruitment and Yorkshire to collectively pay for a co-ordinated and market-tested campaign. This includes regional, prime time TV advertising, a clear brand, digital advertising, paid-for social media posts plus sequences of social media posts for member authorities.
18. It should also be noted that even if successful in securing additional local Foster Carers, the overall level of expenditure on Looked After Children will still be heavily dependent on the total number of children in care at any given time.
19. It is therefore difficult to estimate with any certainty the level of overall financial saving that may be generated as this would be dependent on the needs of the children requiring support at any particular time. However the savings could be significant as, for example, the typical cost of an advanced teenage local foster placement is c37k pa compared to the average external foster agency placement cost of 52k pa, with a maximum current external foster agency placement cost of 81k pa. The current maximum out of city residential placement cost is 302k pa.
20. Therefore, given current and projected numbers, it is still expected that overall costs will continue to exceed budget for the foreseeable future.

## **Human Resources**

21. There are no HR implications as Foster Carers are not City of York Council employees.

## **Legal**

22. Legal Services have been made aware of the report and have reported no issues relating to foster carer proposals.

## **Equalities**

20. None at this stage specific to this paper

## **Crime and Disorder**

21. None at this stage specific to this paper

## **Information Technology (IT)**

22. None at this stage specific to this paper

## **Risk Management**

23. The following risks have been identified:

## **Foster Care**

- The changes do not impact on Foster Carer retention or recruitment therefore they do not increase placement sufficiency
- The implementation of the new offer negatively impacts on Social Worker time and relationships with Foster Carers
- The implementation of the new offer exceeds agreed budget.

## Contact Details

**Author:**  
**Sophie Keeble / William Shaw**  
**Group Manager / Principal Officer**  
**CEC**  
**01904 555333**

**Officer Responsible for the report:**  
**Amanda Hatton**  
**Director**  
**CEC**  
**01904 554434**  
**Report**  **Date** 2.03.19  
**Approved**

**Wards Affected:**

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

### **Annexes**

**Annex A** - Foster Carer Training, Support and Remuneration Offer

**Annex B** – You Said, We Did – Changes that have been made based on Feedback from Foster Carers

**Annex C** – Placement Review Outcomes



## Annex A

### **Foster Carer Training, Support and Remuneration Proposals**

#### **Training and Support**

Our training and support offer is intended to provide carers with continued professional development opportunities. We will provide mandatory training which carers will be expected to attend, this will be complemented by additional training and development opportunities.

We have revised the training available to all Foster Carers and developed clear training expectations linked to the different Foster Carer levels. The targeted training offer will include;

- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Foster Carers
- NSPCC Reflective Fostering training
- Mental Health and E Safety training
- Revised core training modules for new Foster Carers
- Increased access to training alongside Social Workers, provided and promoted by Workforce Development Unit within the Council
- Working with Foster Carers to explore their involvement in the delivery of training to other carers
- Working with Foster Carers and other professionals to understand, promote and implement delegated authority.

We are seeking to build on and enhance the support offer to Foster Carers by;

- Ensuring greater consistency of support across all Foster Carers including Short Break Foster Carers facilitated by the restructure of teams within Children Services
- Ensuring all Foster Carers are aware of York Foster Carer Association (YAFCA) and the support they provide
- Ensuring there is a range of support groups for carers which includes Gateways events, Surgery and support groups and master class informal training sessions.
- Exploring the provision of Psychology-led therapeutic input and clinical supervision for Foster Carers and Social Workers

- Improving the links between Foster Carers and the City of York Virtual School
- Working with Foster Carers to develop an out of hours support offer
- Working with Foster Carers to develop peer / buddy support between Foster Carers

## **Foster Carer Role and Expectation**

The role and responsibility of all City of York Council (CYC) Foster Carers, (irrespective of the level) involves:

- The day-to-day care of children and young people placed with them by City of York Council and to provide them with the experience of normal family life
- Responding appropriately to the needs of looked-after children, for example health, education, religion, culture, race
- Working as part of a team that could include colleagues from a range of other services, including Children's Services, Health, Education, Housing, Youth Offending Team, Police
- Working within fostering and safeguarding policies and procedures

We have reviewed the Foster Carers' levels, we have made changes to the names and developed descriptions that clearly identify the tasks and responsibilities, experience and knowledge, training, support and development requirements and placement requirements for each level. The new levels are contained below. Existing fees payments are unchanged.

Level 1 (incorporating existing Accredited and Experienced carers)

Level 2 (incorporating existing Enhanced carers and Short Break Foster Carers)

Level 3 (incorporating existing Advanced carers and Contracted Short Break Carers)

## **Fees and Allowances**

We propose to make the following changes to fees and allowances.

- Continue to pay child allowances at the Government's minimum rates.
- Foster Carer fee amounts to remain the same however these will be more closely linked to revised role descriptions and expectations for different carer levels
- The following changes to additional allowances paid to Foster Carers are proposed; Increase the payment for multiple placements, a carer illness payment, emergency placement payment, delegated authority payment of £750, long service awards, school holiday allowance reduced to £300, mileages claims removed in relation to the first 200 miles per month, additional allowances for child leisure activities and hobbies replaced with delegated authority payment.
- Short Break Foster Carers will continue to be paid at their existing levels and will align in terms of expectation, support and training with mainstream carers.

The proposals contained in this briefing document relate to all Foster Carers within the Council, including:

- Mainstream Carers
- Short Break Foster Carers – contracted and non contracted
- Connected Carers
- Staying Put Carers

### **Short Break Foster Carers**

Short Break Foster Carers (SBFC) provide short break support and care for disabled children and their families. Contracted SBFC are required to provide a set and agreed amount of short breaks each week for children often with more complex health and behavioural needs.

We propose to make the following changes to Short Break Foster Carers;

- To align the recruitment, assessment, expectation, support and training of contracted and non-contracted Short Break Carers with mainstream Foster Carers.

- To ensure that Short Break Foster Carers are paid a pro rata equivalent of the mainstream Foster Carer level they are aligned to. ie 2 and 3.
- Offer carer illness payment and long service award.
- Delegated authority payment will not apply due to the assumption that birth families will pay for hobbies and specific items.

### **Connected Carers**

Connected Carers are carers who have a pre existing connection with the child or young person in placement. They could be a relative or friend of the child / young person or family. Connected Carers are treated the same as mainstream, unconnected Foster Carers. They will be paid government set child allowance and the Foster Carer fee for the appropriate level. They will also be expected to participate in the training and support provided to all Foster Carers.

In terms of the additional child related allowances mentioned above, connected carers are eligible for the carer illness payment, delegated authority payment and emergency payment if they take an additional emergency placement. An emergency placement is defined as a same day placement that takes place without any pre planning with an approved carer.

### **Stay Put Carers**

Staying Put Carers are Foster Carers or Connected Carers who keep a child or young person with them in placement beyond the age of 18 years. We propose the current fee payment of £210 per week, will remain the same. No other additional payments will be made, in line with the current practice.

## Annex B

### Foster Carer Consultation feedback

#### *You said – We did*

<b>Following consultation with YAFCA prior to the initial proposals</b>	
<b>You said</b>	<b>We did</b>
Language used needs to be more simple and plain English	Made changes to how proposals were explained
Need to define the role of a Foster Carer and clearly identify the difference between the different levels of carers	Defined the role of a Foster Carer Simplified the expectation of the different levels of Foster Carers
Explain the importance of training and explain what is mandatory and what is optional	Added the importance and impact of training and put all training offer in a clear table of core, mandatory and optional
Emergency placement payment should be paid in lump sum not as a daily rate	Daily rate changed to lump sum
Reduction in holiday allowance unfair and would impact on Children in Care	Reduction from 3 weeks to 2 weeks removed Reduction of £400 - 300 to subsidise holidays in school holidays – instead of removing payment

<b>Following consultation with all Foster Carers</b>	
<b>You said</b>	<b>We will</b>
Experienced Foster Carers should be involved in co	Involve level 3 Foster Carers in the delivering of core

delivering training	training
Foster Care values are really important and need to be at the forefront of what we do	Develop a York Foster Carers Charter in partnership with Foster Carers
There needs to be more clarity about the Delegated Authority budget – what it can be spent on and how it will be paid	Provide written guidance on Delegated Authority Budget
It needs to be clear about allowances can still be claimed for.	Re write the Fees and allowances policy
How carers can move up and down the levels needs to be considered and communicated to Foster Carers	Write guidance on this process, including appeals process for Foster Carers

<b>Following consultation with all Foster Carers</b>	
<b>You said</b>	<b>Changes to the financial offer</b>
Some Foster Carers might not need the Delegated Authority payment and some Carers who have older children might need more	Amended the amounts of DA payment 0-4 aged children DA by request from Foster Carer 5-10 -£750 11-15 £850 16-17 £900
The mileage proposals are unclear and adversely affect Foster Carers outside of York	Re written guidance what mileage can and cannot be claim. Calculated the recommended amount of mileage / transport costs as part of the government set child allowance and checked this against mileage claim limit.

## Annex C

### **Outcomes of Placement Review**

1. Ensure a diverse and flexible range of high quality placements are available to meet the current and future needs of Children in Care in York.
2. Children in Foster Care have a normal experience through delegated authority
3. Foster Carer fees and allowances are clear and transparent
4. Foster Carers are trained and supported and their commitment and loyalty is recognized
5. Foster Carers have a clear understanding of what is expected in their role
6. Alternative high quality resources are available for children and young people for whom a placement within a family is not appropriate.
7. All services and provision are provided within the agreed budget