

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 21 MAY 2019

REVIEW OF ALLOWANCES FOR CHILDREN UNDER TWO YEARS OLD

REPORT BY KATHRYN LINDSAY DIRECTOR – CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND JUSTICE

ABSTRACT

This report details proposed changes to the holiday allowances payable to foster and kinship carers with children under 2 years old.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

- (i) Agree to cease the automatic payment of holiday allowances for children under the age of two with immediate effect;
- (ii) Introduce discretionary payments for children under two years, with implementation of this to commence on 1st July 2019.
- (iii) Agree that Foster Carers contracts to be amended accordingly.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes:

- Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens;
- Individual and families are involved in decisions which affect them;
- We have improved the health and wellbeing of our people and inequalities are reduced.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 All Angus Council approved foster carers and eligible kinship carers are paid allowances to provide for the needs of children in their care. All carers also receive additional allowances at Christmas, for the children's birthdays and during holidays to ensure that children can have presents and in recognition of the additional expenses that can occur during the holiday period.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Our current arrangement is that an additional holiday allowance is paid to foster and kinship carers at the start of the school summer holiday to assist with the additional expenses likely to incur. The allowance is equivalent to two weeks of the fostering age allowance at the rate applicable for each child in the placement. This additional allowance is reflected in foster carer's current contracts which would require to be changed.

Consultation has taken place with Angus Council foster carers and questionnaires were specifically sent out to foster carers who are approved to take children under two years of age and kinship carers who have children placed with them who are under two years. There was very limited justification of additional costs incurred with those children in the holiday period which therefore does not merit the ongoing automatic payment of the allowances. As part of the consultation it was foster carers who requested the opportunity for financial support for equipment.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 To ensure that funding is better targeted to improve children's experiences, it is proposed that we change the way that carers of children under two years old are supported financially during the summer holiday period and have the opportunity to invest in appropriate equipment for babies and young children. The changes would involve stopping the automatic payment of holiday allowances to carers at the start of the school summer holidays for children under the age of two.
- 5.2 We also propose the introduction of a scheme to enable approved foster carers and eligible kinship carers to apply to have specific additional costs relating to children under two years old paid during the school summer holiday period to a maximum of the equivalent of the two weeks holiday allowance. Carers making such an application will need to provide evidence that additional expense is in relation to the child, this may include taking the child on holiday, or admission to certain activities.
- 5.3 As a part of a consultation exercise, foster carers also highlighted the costs involved in ensuring they have appropriate equipment for each stage of a child's development in the very early years. This includes new-born baby car seats to those for toddlers and infant prams to pushchairs which can be costly. If the equipment is following the child then carers can be reimbursed. We also propose to use the money previously used for holiday allowances to take a more targeted approach to the payment of holiday allowances to also award discretionary payments for such equipment as required.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no anticipated overall financial implications as a result of this proposal.
- 6.2 The available overall funding will continue to be utilised to support carers to meet children's needs, with any savings from the change in holiday allowance payments being utilised to meet discretionary awards in respect of approved appropriate equipment needs.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation has taken place with Angus Council foster carers and questionnaires were specifically sent to foster carers approved to take children under two years of age and kinship carers who have children under the age of two placed with them.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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