

ANGUS COUNCIL

SPECIAL ARRANGMENTS COMMITTEE – 23 JUNE 2020

FOSTER CARERS AND HOME SCHOOLING ARRANGEMENTS DURING COVID-19

REPORT BY KATHRYN LINDSAY – DIRECTOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND JUSTICE

ABSTRACT

This report sets out proposals to pay foster carers a specific fee in light of the COVID–19 disruption to education for children. Foster carers have provided care for children at home on a full-time basis when they would not otherwise have been required to do so.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approve the proposed amendment to the Skills to Foster Scheme introducing a “COVID-19 home-schooling fee” as detailed at paragraph 4.2.
- (ii) Require the Director of Children, Families and Justice to apply the amendment retrospectively for the period from 23 March 2020 to eligible foster carers on an individual basis whilst the criterion remain satisfied.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2030:

- Children are given the best start in life;
- Physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing is improved;
- There are more opportunities for people to achieve success.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Since Monday 23 March 2020, children who are looked after and accommodated by Angus Council in foster care have not been in school due to the COVID–19 pandemic. Looked after and accommodated children are deemed “vulnerable” and had the option of attending a child care hub. Mostly, children have been supported by their foster carers to remain at home and undertake school work remotely. This has at times created additional pressure on foster carers and fostering households, although overall foster carers have managed this additional expectation extremely well.

3.2 Under the Skills to Foster Scheme (the Scheme), which was approved by the Children and Learning Committee on 10 January 2017 (Report No.8/17), Angus Council Carers Support Service pays foster carers a fee and an allowance for each child in their care. All foster carers are approved under the terms of the Scheme. As part of the Scheme, there are a number of specific additional payments available to foster carers under certain circumstances.

3.3 There are currently 51 school age children in the care of Angus Council being ‘home schooled’ by their foster carers.

4. PROPOSALS

4.1 It is proposed that:

- (i) the Skills to Foster Scheme is amended (as per 4.2 below) to introduce a “COVID-19 home-schooling fee” available to foster carers for each day they have a school age child/children on placement who is unable to attend school due to schooling restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- (ii) the amendment to the Scheme is applied retrospectively for the period from 23 March 2020 to eligible foster carers and payable on an individual basis whilst the criterion remain satisfied.
- (iii) The fee will be £10.00 per day per child.

4.2 The following wording is added to the Skills to Foster Scheme:

“A specific fee will be payable to all foster carers of school age children who are not able to attend school due to schooling restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This fee will be paid at the rate of £10.00 per day per child to all eligible approved foster carers for each full day the child is not at school and will apply during term time only.”

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The daily rate payable in respect of each child (2019-2020) is £10.00 per day and is payable for days which would have been school days in ordinary circumstances. The projected overall cost between 23 March 2020 and the end of the 2020 summer term is £30,600.
- 5.2 Assuming all children remain unable to attend school from August 2020 until December 2020, the additional cost for that period would be £43,350. The estimated total costs to implement between March 2020 and December 2020 would therefore be circa £73,950. However, it is recognised that there is likely to be an incremental increase in school availability during this period and as such the overall cost is likely to be lower in total.

Expenditure will be monitored and reported through financial codes established to monitor COVID-19 expenditure incurred by the Council as the fees represent an additional cost which has arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Scottish Government has earmarked additional resources for local authorities to help them fund the additional costs relating to the COVID-19 response.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 **Risk:** This report does not require any specific risk issues to be addressed.
- 6.2 **Equalities Implications:** The issues in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This report sets out proposals for a specific fee to be payable to Angus Council Foster Carers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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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List of Appendices: N/A