

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 13 JUNE 2017

REVIEW OF FOSTER CARE SKILLS BASED SCHEME FEES

REPORT BY MARK ARMSTRONG, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR – PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

The report seeks approval for the implementation of a revised fee structure for foster carers.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

- (i) Agree the revised fee structure at Appendix 1 for implementation from 1 July 2017.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/
CORPORATE PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement:

- Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens
- Individuals and families are involved in decisions which affect them

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 On 10 January 2017, a revised Angus Council Fostering Skills Based Scheme was approved (Ref No 8/17) with an implementation date of July 2017. Following approval of the revised scheme, there was a review of the fee structure which required to be reconsidered in line with the new expectations on foster carers. It is necessary to ensure the fee structure is appropriately aligned to the new scheme prior to implementation.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Foster carers are paid a fee for caring for each child in their care. The level of fee depends on where a foster carer is placed on the skills based scheme. The level reflects their skills, experience and ability to meet children's needs. Consultation with carers during the skills based scheme review highlighted an imbalance in fee levels across the scheme. Carers will not necessarily move through the skill levels if they do not wish to but may offer considerable additional support to the child in their care. For example, by providing significant home based care for younger children, being actively involved in facilitating contact with parents and supporting children in school. Introducing a revised approach to fees would encourage and enable carers to undertake important tasks to help meet the needs of our vulnerable children without financial disadvantage or the pressure to progress through the skill levels.

4.2 At present there is not a significant financial incentive for carers to provide placements for 2 or more children. By increasing the additional child payments we are encouraging carers to provide placements for more children including siblings. Currently we have 19 sets of siblings placed together in foster placements and there are six sets of siblings living apart. It is anticipated that additional financial support for three children in placement might help with recruitment of carers willing to care for sibling groups. Since January 2017 we have seen an

increase in the number of siblings referred for a family placement. Under the revised scheme there is a predicted number of approximately 11 foster carers who will not meet the criteria for level three on the new scheme and they will be placed at level two.. The increased fees will ensure these foster carers are not financially disadvantaged.

- 4.3 Recruitment and retention of foster carers is an extremely competitive market both locally and nationally and we need to pay competitive fees to be able to offer local placements with Angus Council foster carers. There are at least 11 external agencies actively recruiting foster carers within the Angus area and a comparison of the fees being offered by these agencies, and by neighbouring local authorities, demonstrates that we pay significantly less to our foster carers. As an example, Angus Council pay level one carers with two children £10,538.54 compared with a neighbouring authority who pay £16,005.60 for two children. Whilst exact comparisons are difficult because of scheme differences; a competitive fee structure would reduce the risk of Angus foster carers moving to other agencies and enable us to use this as a positive feature in recruitment campaigns.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Foster Carers fees are increased in line with the outline attached in Appendix 1. The revised fee structure provides uplift to fees payable at all levels of the skills based scheme. This helps keep the Angus Fostering Service competitive and improves our ability to attract and retain carers.
- 5.2 The degree of uplift varies in accordance with the level of the scheme so that the revised fee structure better reflects the recently approved skills based scheme and foster carers are proportionately recompensed for the support they deliver to our children. The proposed changes to the fees payable where additional placements are offered will promote the placement of sibling groups where appropriate.
- 5.3 These proposed changes bring the Angus fee structure more closely in line with neighbouring authorities.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An investment bid of £170k was sought and approved during the budget setting process to support the implementation of a revised fee structure for the skills based scheme. The proposed increase in foster carers' fees can therefore be met within existing revenue budgets.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and no issues were arising.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The revised fee structure at Appendix 1 has been developed taking account of feedback following extensive consultation with Foster Carers and a range of key stakeholders and reflects the preferred option following the consultation process.

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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Appendix 1
Angus Council Skills Based Scheme – Fees for Foster Carers

Current Fees				
Carer Level	Core Fee	1 child	2 children	3 children
Level 1	£6,335.43	£8,436.98	£10,538.54	£12,640.10
Level 2	£9,487.76	£11,589.32	£13,690.88	£15,792.44
Level 3	£16,848.34	£18,949.90	£21,051.46	£23,153.01

Proposed Fees				
Carer Level	Core Fee	1 child	2 children	3 children
Level 1	£7,540	£12,040	£16,540	£21,040
Level 2	£10,700	£15,200	£19,700	£24,200
Level 3	£17,440	£19,690	£21,940	

Increase Level 1 core fee by £1,200 and £2,398 for each additional child

Increase Level 2 core fee by £1,200 and £2,398 for each additional child

Increase Level 3 core fee by £600 and £148 for each additional child

Where a carer offers a placement to a child above their approval number, the carers allowance will increase by £2250 pa (£43.00 per week) for the period the child is in placement only.