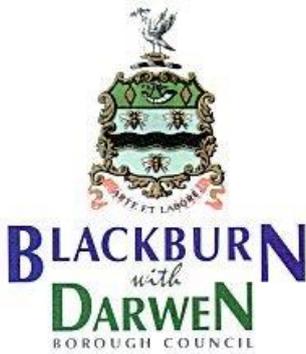


# EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION



<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Children's Young People and Education
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Director of Children's Services and Education (Please Select)
<b>DATE:</b>	09/11/20

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Children's Young People and Education
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	All

<b>SUBJECT:</b> Foster Carer and Special Guardian Payments Proposal 2020/21
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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A payment review has considered Local Authority challenges in terms of the recruitment and retention of foster carers. This also takes into account our competitors in neighbouring Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies, in terms of rates of pay. In order to recruit and retain foster carers, the payment rates awarded need to be competitive and well promoted in the Borough and beyond.

An attractive pay allowance, alongside a strong support package offer, is paramount in order to increase new fostering enquiries and also to retain our existing cohort of carers and prevent the rate of transfer to Independent Fostering Agencies.

It is necessary to present an annual payments paper for Executive Member decision making, this year 2020-21, financial support is more important than ever in the current climate. Any Foster Carer payment proposal must include the same percentage for Special Guardianship Carers following legal advice and guidance.

Appendix 1 outlines the rationale for requesting a 2% annual percentage increase in line with inflation and this has already been factored into the budget for 2020-2021. This percentage mirrors the increase awarded last financial year.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Member considers the report alongside Appendix 1, which makes a recommendation to award all Foster Carers and Special Guardianship Carers, a 2% annual pay increase for 2020-2021. This is in line with inflation for the year.

## 3. BACKGROUND

It is increasingly challenging for the Local Authority to attract potential Foster Carers, significantly more so in the current climate. Neighbouring Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) are also reviewing and increasing their allowances to remain competitive in the market.

Blackburn with Darwen's proposal is to enhance the Foster Carer financial and support offer to attract new applicants, and boost our recruitment figures. A review of the Fostering 'front door' is also underway to ensure an efficient and robust response to recruitment, enquires and assessments.

- This paper has been revised and amended to reflect a 2% percentage increase for all foster carers and SGO carers in line with inflation and this has already been reflected in this year's budget allocation. An 'invest to save' approach has been overridden by a 2% increase for the year overall.

- Should this percentage be agreed, this will be communicated to exiting foster carers but will also be beneficial in promoting Blackburn with Darwen's Fostering pay and support offer alongside our recruitment campaigns.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS**

- An annual pay increase has been awarded for the past 5 years at 1%, and last year offering a 2% pay increase to assist with the retention and recruitment of Foster Carers.

- There is a widespread challenge nationally with the recruitment of Foster Carers, and the market is increasingly competitive. As a small Local Authority, the aim is to remain attractive to potential Foster Carers above our major competitors. The more appealing our pay and recruitment drive, the more placements we can achieve in-house, therefore making a longer term saving on commissioned agency placements.

- Placement sufficiency is a key issue for the service and the primary focus is to promote an annual pay increase for foster carers alongside recruitment campaigns and initiatives. Attracting more foster carers will protect and reduce our commissioning budget, however as a service we can only do this with an attractive support offer and allowances for our in-house carers. Placement sufficiency and stability remains a key priority for 2020-2021.

-The proposal is to match the Foster Carer pay increase for Special Guardianship (SGO) Carers, as legal advice and SGO guidance promotes the same offer for those carers, with no financial detriment.

#### **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The Foster Carer payments policy and guidance will be revised following decision making from this paper.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

A 2% increase would be an additional £60,992 for fostering households, bands 1-3 from the fostering budget.

A 2% increase would be an additional £41,987 for Special Guardianship Carers from the SGO budget.

Total additional expenditure - £102,979 (based on expenditure in 2019/2020)

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal advice has been sought and to pay Special Guardianship Order Carers a different rate, or to omit them from the pay award would be detrimental and risk possible Judicial Review.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional resource implications from this decision.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

**Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.**

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

None required

## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded and published if applicable.

<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>2</b>
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Pamela Price, Service Lead, Placements</b>
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<b>DATE:</b>	06/11/20
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	Please consider Appendix 1 alongside this paper.
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