

EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member for Children's Young People and Education

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Children's Services and Education

DATE: 03/01/2020

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Children's Young People and Education

WARD/S AFFECTED: All

SUBJECT: Foster Carer Payments/Allowances Paper

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A review of the payments and allowances paid to Blackburn with Darwen foster carers has been undertaken, specifically in relation to the annual pay increase. This was to determine an annual pay increase percentage, given that an offer of 1% has been awarded over the past five years.

The review process has considered Local Authority challenges in terms of the recruitment and retention of foster carers, also taking into account our competitors in neighbouring authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies in terms of pay. In order to recruit and retain foster carers the offer of allowances and support need to be appealing and well promoted in the Borough and beyond.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Member considers the approval of the recommended 2% annual pay increase for all foster carers and Special Guardianship Order carers, and the additional benefits for foster carers. It is therefore requested that agreement is considered to commission;

A 2% annual pay increase for all foster carers and SGO carers

This would be an annual increase of £84,548 for all bands 1-3 and SGO carers.

A further proposal for a foster carer retainer fee will be brought for an Executive Member Decision at a later date due to further discussions ongoing around the financial implications.

2. BACKGROUND

Given the challenges with recruiting and retaining foster carers, and the increase in the number of children in our care, it has been vital to consider the foster carer payment offer to remain as competitive as we can be in the market. There has been a 1% annual pay increase for foster carers and SGO carers for the past five years, and no award for this financial year yet agreed.

The proposal is to award a 2% increase and to backdate this to 1st April 2019. It is increasingly

challenging for the Local Authority to attract potential foster carers in the current climate, and it is fair to say that neighbouring Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) are also reviewing and increasing allowances to remain competitive in the market. Blackburn with Darwen aim to enhance our foster carer offer and promote this to try to attract new applicants, and boost our recruitment figures.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

- An annual pay increase is required with some priority with a backdated payment to April 2019, 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 authority, we strive to remain attractive to potential foster carers above our major competitors. The more appealing our recruitment drive, the more placements we can achieve in-house therefore making a longer term saving.

- Placement sufficiency is a key issue for the service and our focus is to promote this support and pay increase for foster carers as part of the recruitment campaign. 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.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The foster carer payments policy and guidance will be revised following decision making from this paper.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To award a 2% annual pay increase to all foster carers and Special Guardianship carers at their banding levels 1, 2 and 3 would result in an additional spend of £84,548.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None for this annual increase.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional resource implications of 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

No formal consultation due to the financial decision-making nature of this request. However, the Foster Carer Association for Blackburn with Darwen have been involved in discussions about annual pay decisions and timescales.

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.

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CONTACT OFFICER:	Pamela Price, Interim Service Lead Placements
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DATE:	13/12/2019
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	
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