

PART A - Initial Impact Assessment

Proposal Name: Foster payment review

EIA ID: 2583

EIA Author: Kate Dymond

Proposal Outline: To align with our strategic intent and in order to maximise foster carer recruitment and maintain and maximise our current foster carer cohort we propose: 1. We align our foster care payments with council priorities on improving education outcomes. 2. We review foster care sundries to ensure they remain appropriate and incorporate them to the allowance to ensure simplicity of payment. 3. From 2025/6 all sundry payments are increased in line with the annual increase to National Minimum Allowances. 4. Level one Skills allowances are not paid until after the foster carers first annual review and completion of National Minimum standards. 5. Skills payments are not increased at present but are reviewed every two years to ensure that Sheffield City Council Offer remains competitive within the market. 6. There is a bonus paid to new foster carers upon first placement post approval and upon completion of the Fostering National Standards within 12 months.

Proposal Type: Non-Budget

Year Of Proposal: 24/25

Lead Director for proposal: Sally Williams

Service Area: Children's

EIA Start Date: 02/02/2024

Lead Equality Objective:

Break the cycle and improve life chances

Equality Lead Officer:

Bashir Khan

Decision Type

Committees:

Policy Committees

- Education, Children & Families

Portfolio

Primary Portfolio:

Children and Families

EIA is cross portfolio:

No

EIA is joint with another organisation:

No

Overview of Impact

Overview Summary:

The proposal has been designed to meet the ongoing objectives of our sufficiency strategy, and the principles behind the proposal are:

- It is simple, fair and easy to understand. This needs to be clearly articulated
- It enables Sheffield City Council to be competitive with local independent fostering agencies and other local authorities.
- It recognises the complex task of fostering other people's children.
- The care payment will meet the Department for Education's national minimum fostering allowance. The budget setting process is managed in such a way that increases in spend are anticipated and managed. This proposal will have a positive impact on care experienced young people. It will have a positive impact on foster carers who have completed their national minimal standards. The proposed change will have an impact on on potential foster carers who will now not get level 1 skills payment until they have completed their national

minimal standards, but this will align us with other local authorities. The impact of this change is being mitigated by the provision of 2 bonuses for these carers.

Impacted characteristics:

- Care Experienced
- Poverty & Financial Inclusion
- Age
- Race

Consultation and other engagement

Cumulative Impact

Does the proposal have a cumulative impact: Yes

Impact areas: Year on Year

Initial Sign-Off

Full impact assessment required: Yes

Review Date: 02/02/2024

PART B - Full Impact Assessment

Age

Staff Impacted:

Customers Impacted:

Yes

Description of Impact:

20% of current approved foster carers (excluding those approved as family/friends carers) are over the age of 60. The review of Fostering payments will have a positive impact on any carer who has completed their National Minimum standards, by increasing sundry payments year on year and increasing the payment to take children on holiday during school holidays. For prospective foster carers who have not completed their level 1 national minimum standards, this proposal will align us with other regional authorities and will have a negative financial impact on those individuals. However, this is being mitigated by two bonuses £1000 for taking a first placement and £1500 for completion of Minimum standards in 12 months. Overall this will mean that Sheffield continues to be a very competitive place for financial remuneration for fostering and will therefore overall have a positive impact on making fostering age-friendly. Providing information to foster carers on payments in a clearer more consistent format will ensure that our payments are simple, fair and easy to understand for all prospective and current carers.

Poverty & Financial Inclusion

Staff Impacted:

No

Customers Impacted:

Yes

Description of Impact:

The review of foster carer payments will have a positive impact on all foster carers who have completed their level one skills payment. Adding £250 per child when foster carers go on holiday in school holidays will benefit all foster carers. Reviewing sundry payments and ensuring that they are increased in line with the fostering National Minimum Allowances will benefit all foster carers. The review will have a negative impact on new foster carers who have not yet made an enquiry as they will not receive the skills payment until they have completed their Fostering Standards. Whilst it is not possible to know who will be impacted, as they have not applied yet, analysis of foster carers who have been approved to foster in since 2022 shows 36% of approved foster carers live in Band A properties, with a further 28% in Band B council tax properties. Council

Tax Valuation Bands have been shown to be a potentially useful measure of individual level socio-economic status and indicators of poverty. Over 1/3 of foster carers are therefore in households where poverty and financial inclusion are a significant factor. Upon taking their first placement they will receive £1000, and upon completing this within 12 months they will receive a £1500 bonus. By adopting a clear approach to payments from 1/4/24 it will reassure foster carers that payments and allowances will be aligned to inflation. It will also provide reassurance and clarity on the frequency of review of the skills payments, and the commitment that we will remain competitive as a fostering service Local Authority.

Race

Staff Impacted: No

Customers Impacted: Yes

Description of Impact: 75% of our current approved foster carers (excluding those who are friends and family carers are white british) compared to 63% of our looked after children. We are keen to encourage people from across Sheffield's diverse communities to see that fostering is a viable option for them. This proposal will support us to be competitive in terms of payments especially regionally. We have been told by our foster carers that our payments can be confusing. Providing information to foster carers on payments in a clearer more consistent format will ensure that our payments are simple, fair and easy to understand for all perspective and current carers. We are intending that this transparency will enable to to improve recruitment particularly from underrepresented communities.

Action Plan & Supporting Evidence

Outline of action plan: To mitigate the impact of removing the skills fee for foster carers who have not yet completed the minimum standard payment we are proposing two bonuses. Firstly £1000 upon the first placement, and secondly, £1500 if they complete the standards within 12 months as is expected. In addition the additional bonuses given to foster carers as part of the review will benefit any approved foster carer in the long -term (

increased school holiday payments, increased sundry payments)

Action plan evidence:

Evidence used comes from data held on Foster Carers by Children and Families

Changes made as a result of action plan:

Mitigation

Significant risk after mitigation measures: No

Outline of impact and risks:

Review Date

Review Date: 02/02/2024