

**Fostering**  
Room 248, County Hall  
Topsham Rd  
EXETER  
EX2 4QD

Tel: 01392 383000

Email: [fosteringoperationsmanager-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:fosteringoperationsmanager-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)

Date:

Dear Carer,

I have two important developments to share with you:

### 1) **Birthday and Festival Allowance**

Thank you to everyone who took part in our recent consultation into Birthday and Festival Allowances. We extended the process until the end of September to allow young people to have their say after the summer break.

We discussed a number of options, agreeing that the allowances needed to:

- Be affordable
- Be equitable
- Be fair for birth children
- Listen to the voice of the children in care
- Listen to the voice of the foster carer
- Enable care leavers to have an allowance

We have taken into account all views, and with due care and attention we have agreed that the following allowance rates will be set:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Amount</b>
0 – 4	£100.00
5 – 10	£164.80
11 – 17	£205.24
18	£249.71
19+	£50.00

These changes will be made to the Festival Allowance in time for this Christmas, giving almost three months' notice. Changes to the Birthday Allowance will start from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, so not impacting on any young people between now and then.

We were pleased to hear from those consulted that the new allowances:

- meant the least change from the current arrangements
- acknowledged feedback from carers and young children that the previous allowance was a lot of money to spend on preschool aged children and was unfair on birth children
- allow a higher amount for the 18th 'landmark' birthday

- mean care leavers also receive an allowance
- was the option most preferred by all young people consulted
- was one of the two preferred options with the foster carers consulted.

Thank you again to those involved in this process, we know how important these allowances are to enable young people to celebrate their birthdays and festivals.

## **2) Commissioning of Organisation to provide support to Foster Carers**

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to consider the issues involved in selecting which organisation we commission to provide support to foster carers. This process has included presentations to the Foster Carer Strategy Group and the Foster Care Association. The direct feedback from carers was very balance with carers providing feedback on the pro's and con's for each organisation. Carers did express their preferences with a small majority for Foster Talk.

In addition I have met representatives from both organisations.

In making the decision the following issues have been carefully considered:

- Quality of support lines.
- Quality of insurance cover.
- How they communicate.
- Political lobbying.
- Carers preferences.
- Staff preferences.
- The impact of change.
- Additional benefits provided.

The cost of the services did not require consideration as the cost were fundamentally the same. Having considered all issues involved the following decision has been made:

- Carers support is to be provided by Foster Talk.
- Corporate membership is to be maintained with Fostering Network. This will allow the continuation of access to the political lobbying and support to staff and access to forums.
- 6 individual memberships to be available to Devon carers to enable active engagement at regional and national events. The arrangements for this will be confirmed.

These changes will be come into force within the coming month and will enable carers to access some of the offers available from Foster Talk in time for Christmas.

Please be aware that the change of membership will be seamless and insurance cover will not cease at any point.

I trust that these changes will support you in the care for your children and that it is clear that the decision making has fully considered all the issues.

Yours sincerely,



Luke Chapman  
County Manager, Placements and Permanence