

Chief Officer for Childrens Services

To all Devon Foster Carers

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Dear Colleague.

As we approach Foster Care fortnight (14 to 27 May) and highlight the incredible work that foster carers are doing to support vulnerable children in our care, I'd like to update you on our current review.

Firstly, thank you for your patience as we work together to construct a new foster carers' fee structure that is transparent and fair, and that draws a line under the complex set of arrangements that have evolved over the years.

With a group of foster carers, we've collectively looked at alternative fee structure models and are currently working on developing the preferred model that you can thoroughly examine. I had hoped we would be able to take the preferred model to Scrutiny in June and Cabinet in July. That timetable was ambitious, and I'm afraid that we have not been able to complete the necessary financial modelling in that timeframe. I think that we can all agree though that it's better to reach the right decision slightly later, than a wrong decision made in haste.

I want to also reassure you that our Councillors, from the very beginning, have been clear that this is not a cost saving exercise. They are also clear that any changes that affect individual carers must be limited and phased in order to ensure minimal disruption. Councillors have said that they have no intention of 'robbing Peter to pay Paul'. Indeed, our early modelling indicates that we may need additional investment, which has not been built into our medium term financial plan, hence the need for further detailed work.

I also want to say that although there has been some noise in the system, I am very pleased that we have not lost any carers to the independent sector, or to another local authority, during the review. This is important, and I hope it remains the case. Some of our carers have been particularly anxious. My advice to us all is that we are in a process and it has to run its course; everyone has had, and will continue to have, every opportunity to have their voice heard. It's important that we all move forward together rather than go over the same ground again.

Kath and Luke will be bringing the proposed model to you as soon as possible. The final model will go to Children's Scrutiny Committee in September and to our Cabinet Committee in October.

I am very confident that we will be able to work together to identify a new fee structure that is fair to all and that will help us recruit more foster carers to our service.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Olsson', written in a cursive style.

Jo Olsson
Chief Officer for Childrens Services