CS/18/25
Children's Scrutiny
17 September 2018

Consultation: Fostering fees and Allowances – ADDENDUM REPORT

Report of the Chief Officer Children's Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

1. Introduction and Recommendation

1.1 The responsibilities a Council holds for children in care are unique and to be discharged with the utmost care and gravity. The Council is a corporate parent and all its decision-making pertaining to children in care must have the welfare of the child as the paramount consideration. Being child centred isn't always easy as there are always other interests in play. Members are required to discern in the myriad representations, where the best interests of the child lie.

1.2 This report and addendum proposes changes to the current structure of foster carers' fees.

Scrutiny members are asked to:

Support the proposed changes to the fee structure, recommending any adjustments to cabinet that they consider appropriate.

1.3 The matter under consideration is sensitive and complex. The main report before the committee covers:

- Background information about children in care and fostering
- The case for change
- The process for developing the recommended fee structure model
- The model
- The consultation on the preferred model
- The consultation responses
- The conclusion and recommendations

This addendum report covers activity since the submission of the main report and addresses any new or significantly different issues that may have emerged during that time.

2. Addendum report.

2.1 The main body of the report to Scrutiny Committee was submitted before the end of the formal consultation to comply with the publication timescales for the committee papers. It was agreed that we would submit an addendum report covering activity during the period between filing that report and the close of the formal consultation process.

2.2 This detail (the intent to submit an addendum report) was omitted from the body of the main report, and we apologise for any confusion or anxiety that this may have caused. That the remaining two consultation events were still important events was communicated to carers and both events were well attended.

2.3 The two final consultation events were held on 11 and 12 September attended by 27 and 16 carers respectively. Feedback points from these two events are listed in summary as Appendix 3.

2.4 Members of the Scrutiny Committee, other elected Members, and senior Officers of the council have received several detailed email submissions, some against the proposal and some in favour.

2.5 The *IWGB - Foster Care Workers Union* submitted a final submission letter on behalf of its members requesting further consultation through a workshop with them on the following points:

i. Birthday, Christmas and holiday payments to stay extant, with a process in place for those carers who wish to draw an advance of the payment.
ii. Retain the age-related scales that are recommended by the fostering network as "the true cost of fostering, by age".
iii. No fostering household should suffer a decrease as part of this review.
iv. The career progression scheme (payment for skills rather than labelling the children) should continue

2.6 We do not propose to extend the consultation period but will continue to engage with foster carers on many aspects of the consultation feedback including their experiences with some of the processes already in place, such as how mileage expenses are claimed. Addressing each of the four points in the IWGB request:

i. We have already made a commitment in the main report (para 7.21) to review this aspect of the proposal, based on carer feedback. This will not change the overall allowance over the year.
ii. Whilst having regard for the work of the Fostering Network, the Council wants to strengthen the focus on children and their needs, matching payments to the complexity of need. The removal of the age bands has been proposed in the belief that caring for children at any age is expensive. The basic allowance proposed exceeds the government's recommended allowance. That is our proposal.

iii. We have outlined in the main report (para. 5.11) our proposals to protect the income of foster carers whose total allowances are reduced by 5% or more for two years or until the end of the placement, whichever comes first. We have listened to the feedback and agree that no fostering household should suffer a decrease during the proposed period of protection and will be taking forward a revised proposal that protection for two years or until the end of the current placement, whichever comes first, is also extended to those fostering households where the reduction in total allowances is less than 5%.

iv. We have stated in the main report (para. 7.20) that we agree that any scheme should recognise carers' experience and expertise hence the allocations for training, development and support groups. However, we do not agree that the scheme should be based on this; we believe it should be fundamentally grounded in children and their needs.

3.0 Conclusion and recommendations

3.1 Following consultation we intend to amend the proposal to be taken to Cabinet on 10 October as per para 2.6 iii of this addendum report, extending protection of income to all foster carers experiencing a reduction in allowances for a period of two years or until the current placement ends, whichever comes first.

3.2 The conclusion and recommendations reported in section 8 of the main report remain unchanged and **Scrutiny Members are asked to:**

Support the proposed changes to the fee structure, recommending any adjustments to cabinet that they consider appropriate.

Darryl Freeman
Head of Children's Social Care (Deputy Chief Officer)

Electoral Divisions: All
Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills: Councillor James McInnes
Chief Officer for Childrens Services: Jo Olsson

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

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Appendix 3

Feedback 11.09.2018

- Pleased to see expenses staying as they are
- How will a child be accurately assessed when they come into care? Often aggressive behaviour only slows after a settling period of 4/6 weeks
- Explanation of "YP behaviour only" needed
- Assessment should be done with foster carer input, not purely by social worker – we know what child's behaviour etc is
- Tier 2 need a voice. It seems our role without progression
- Please don't "label" the child
- Payments if carers put on standby for a placement?
- Please consider respite foster carers re support groups and training payments
- Please protect the payments for those carers under 5% for two years
- I think this exercise is not addressing issue of how much is paid to IFAs
- The role Tier 2 carers provide for the service short term are waiting without pay. Unable to work
- When your child goes to a respite carer, currently your money gets cut (child allowance removed). What will happen with the new system. Do you get full pay for 2 weeks?
- EDT single payment then when will the assessment be done
- It seems that tier 2s will be valued the same as new carers with no value for their experience
- Why is CAHMS involvement scored so low?
- If more issues found need to re-evaluate
- The effects of emotional trauma are not included in the needs criteria assessment – they have a significant impact on learning and fall outside the ECHP
- Would a nurse with 15 years' experience be expected to give part of their pay to attract agency carers to join their team? Teachers? Social workers?
- Birthday & Christmas money should remain separate
- Needs Criteria health section – can receiving play therapy or art therapy be added? Not just CAHMS involvement
- Needs Assessment – young person's behaviour – poor term. "Blames" child for difficulties should be "beyond parental control"
- Christmas, birthday etc does not work for short term placements
- Why are hospital discharges so low? Mental health.
- Include in support & training other sources i.e. adoption refugee council NATP
- Why attack us because we don't have any rights
- Still no progression for a tier 2 carer. Need to value our expertise in babies and young children
- What about the tier 2 carers will lose under 5%? They need protection
- Single carers will struggle to take children who will not --- in the scoring. Be considered high need but still require a high level of "time in".
- £345 per week is too low. £70 per week cut 16-18-year-old! Tier 2
- You say once a child's level has been assessed it won't change. But what if they get worse? What if they then get 'easier'? Will it go down?
- Longevity/permanency of placements should be rewarded if Devon is trying to encourage 'permanently linked' placements

- Why cut payments for 16-18-year olds? More not less
- The IFA I previously worked for expected us to pay the first 200 miles per week!
- Training – attachment training (12 weeks) to cover training requirements
- Working towards a level to enhanced doesn't take into the needs of our own children. Own children add value to children in care
- Why travel not included in payments? As this causes the most difficulties to be paid
- Increased training around transition/adoption process. More support in place
- Child suffering bereavement should be included in the needs criteria – as well as 'emotional trauma'
- No carer should have money withdrawn
- Allowances need to be separate
- Need clarity around what constitutes training and support groups. Adequate help for carers to attend – childcare, transport etc
- Additional allowances (holiday, birthday, Christmas) paid separately. Birthday & Christmas arrive automatically but current systems around payment of holiday allowance and additional expenses claims don't work – payments take too long to come through
- Assessment criteria: risk to self, not just "no English" (try English as a 2nd language), 10a: beyond parental control, 11c: this is an issue just because there is no CAHMS involvement doesn't mean there shouldn't be

12.09.2018

- Birthdays need to be kept separate. If holidays are included, the children will have to remain at home as will not be able to afford to take them. If the model is implemented in November, carers will struggle to fund Christmas
- I sympathise with everyone trying to find a solution to this problem
- What about child's family – threat of violence, constant phone calls, turning up unannounced
- New foster carer: new scheme appears far clearer, concise and fairer. (Staff very helpful!)
- Is mileage still being paid? Is it to remain 45p a mile?
- Assessment does not include OT speech therapist etc
- Christmas, birthday and holiday allowance should be paid separately
- If I lose money I will move to an IFA as I have walked before
- Overall a fairer scheme which rewards hard work
- Christmas, birthday and holiday allowances to be kept separate
- As a positive I do think that the system does need an overhaul. Good luck ☺
- I think the process is fairer providing the assessment is done fairly. I don't think it is fair for anyone to lose money
- Great idea. It will work!
- No change in placement fees until placement finishes
- There should be an increment for age. A teenager costs a lot more to feed and clothe than a 3-year-old
- No change to placement fees. No carer should be worse off
- All carers paid one rate then have an enhanced rate e.g. £550 - £650