

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION**

***CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION CABINET BOARD***

***28<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2016***

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE  
SERVICES – A. JARRETT**

**MATTER FOR DECISION**

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

**FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT STRATEGY & FINANCE POLICY**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval to:

- increase the current foster carers' fees by £50 a week for children aged 11 plus
- to pay a retainer of up to 6 weeks per annum to foster carers who are approved for children aged 11 plus, subject to the terms and conditions that will apply

The increase in weekly payments and the payment of a retainer will support the recruitment and retention of foster carers for teenagers in order to reduce the number of young people placed in independent foster placements. This will promote outcomes for young people and reduce the cost of Independent placements, enabling the Council to make greater savings.

**2. Executive Summary**

The aim of the Foster Carers Recruitment Strategy is to identify the profile of Looked After Children and foster carers in Neath Port Talbot

and to consider the key issues which need to be addressed to have a positive impact on the recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced carers within this Local Authority.

The Fostering Recruitment Strategy identifies the following:

- The number of children who are looked after by NPT has reduced.
- The number of enquires to the fostering service and the number of foster carers being approved has reduced.
- The fostering service has been able to continue to attract applications for carers for children under the age of 10, but of the enquiries for children over the age of 11 is less than half of all enquiries.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of children placed with Independent Foster Carers, however nearly half of the young people who are placed are over the age of 11.
- The impact of early intervention and prevention services, family support service and improvements in the stability and quality of practice has resulted in the number of young children becoming looked after reducing.
- The number of vacancies for placements for children aged 11 plus is very low resulting in limited placement choice and availability.
- The payments to NPT foster carers for children aged 11 plus is lower than the local market average. An increase in payment is required to ensure that NPT is a viable option for those considering fostering as a career.
- The fostering service cannot provide a reassurance to carers of a retainer to cover any gaps in placement availability making it difficult to attract skilled carers who are choosing fostering as a career.
- Additional support services are required to support young people and their carers who have complex needs in order to prevent placement breakdowns and children moving between placements and to residential care.

### **3. Background**

In January 2015 the Looked After Children's Strategy was approved and implemented. The strategy set out Children and Young People's intention to safely reduce the number of Looked After Children in NPT by ensuring that where possible children are able to achieve permanency

outside of the Looked After Childrens system. It sets out arrangements to ensure that only the children who need to be looked after become accommodated and sets to ensure that when children do become looked after that they are placed in appropriate high quality placements in their local community with skilled carers who can meet their needs.

The Looked After Children's Strategy identifies the need to profile the carers and young people to develop a foster carers recruitment strategy to ensure there is a sufficiency in service provision.

#### **4. Financial Impact**

The Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy recommends that there is an increase in foster carer payments in order to ensure that NPT is able to provide a competitive fee to match the local market. Currently, the payments for carers looking after children over the age of 11 is lower than neighbouring Local Authorities and local independent foster carers. This makes it difficult to recruit and attract foster carers for teenagers.

The report recommends that a retainer is paid to foster carers for teenagers in order to support the recruitment and retention of carers. The cost of the increased fee and introducing a retainer is £201,686.

This amount is not required as an up-front payment. It is proposed that the amount is met from within existing budgets. The additional cost will be offset by anticipated savings in external placements arising from bringing Looked After Children currently in external placements back in house.

#### **5. Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Screening Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessment it has been determined that this proposal does not require an Equality Impact Assessment.

The proposals within the Fostering Recruitment Strategy will not have a negative impact on the current foster carers within NPTCBC. Nor will it have an adverse impact on the young people within the foster care

system. The proposals will not alter the type and/or level of foster provision that the foster carers provide and/or the provision that the young person receives.

*(Please see Appendix 3 for EIA screening form)*

## **6. Workforce Impacts**

There are no workforce impacts associated with this report.

## **7. Legal Impacts**

There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

## **8. Risk Management**

The risk associated with failing to implement the proposed recommendations is that the benefits outlined earlier in this report associated with the introduction of a Fostering Recruitment Strategy will not be realised.

## **9. Consultation**

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

## **10. Recommendation**

It is recommended that Members approve the following:

- to increase the current foster carers' fees by £50 a week for children aged 11 plus
- to pay a retainer of up to 6 weeks per annum to foster carers who are approved for children aged 11 plus, subject to the terms and conditions that will apply

## **11. Reason for Proposed Decision**

The reason for the proposed decision is to support the recruitment and retention of foster carers for teenagers in order to reduce the number of

young people placed in independent foster placements. This will promote outcomes for young people and reduce the cost of Independent placements, enabling the Council to make greater savings.

## **12. Implementation of Decision**

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

## **13. Appendices**

Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy

Appendix 1          Financial implications

Appendix 2          Foster Carer Finance Policy

Appendix 3          EIA Screening Form

## **14. List of Background Papers**

None

## **15. Officer Contact**

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