

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**13 DECEMBER 2022**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING**

**UPDATED FOSTERING ALLOWANCES POLICY**

**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:-

- Provide Cabinet with details of the updated Fostering Allowances Policy.

**2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities**

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-

- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

**3. Background**

3.1 In March 2022 Bridgend County Borough Council's Fostering Services brought their new Fostering Financial Policy to Cabinet for approval, with approval also sought to delegate authority to the Head of Children's Social Care to implement the new policy.

3.2 During the implementation phase of the policy an administrative error was identified as follows:-

## Fostering Allowances 2021/2022

| Age         | Allowance (weekly)                 |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 0 – 4 yrs   | £194.00                            |
| 5 – 10 yrs  | £177.00                            |
| 11 – 15 yrs | £220.00 – Should have been £177.38 |
| 16 – 17 yrs | £224.37                            |

## Fostering Allowances 2022/2023

| Age         | Allowance (weekly)              |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 0 – 4 yrs   | £200.00                         |
| 5 – 10 yrs  | £183.00                         |
| 11 – 15 yrs | £183.00 (This was not included) |
| 16 – 17 yrs | £228.00                         |

- 3.3 The corrected allowances above are in line with Welsh Government recommended rates.
- 3.4 No Foster Carer received an erroneous amount and the Policy was amended to include the correct financial information as set out above.
- 3.5 In July 2022 the Fostering Financial Policy was further updated to change the rates of allowance following agreement at Cabinet to award a 7% increase to the allowances paid to all Bridgend Foster Carers (which would be backdated to April 2022 and apply to the 2022/23 financial year) and the introduction of 2 weeks paid respite for all Foster Wales Bridgend Foster Carers.

## 4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The 7% increase to Foster Care Allowances agreed by Cabinet in July 2022 has now been paid to Foster Carers.
- 4.2 The administrative error in the Policy was amended during the implementation period

## 5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 The Fostering Allowances Policy is an updated policy and does not have an impact on the current policy framework and operating procedure.

## 6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 An initial EIA screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

- 6.2 The screening also gave consideration to any potential socio-economic disadvantage as resulting from this Policy, but again identified that there was no negative impact as Foster Carers provide children and young people in their care a secure safe living environment that provides them with the support they require to achieve better outcomes and higher social and educational achievement which could improve any impact of socio-economic disadvantage.
- 6.3 Given the outcome of the screening exercise there is no requirement for a full Equality Impact Assessment to be undertaken.

## 7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver well-being outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

- **Long Term** – Children’s Social Care always seek to support children to live with their family wherever it is safe for them to do so. When a child needs to become looked after by the Local Authority it is vital that BCBC has sufficient numbers of carers available to be able to offer that child a home within their local community, that will allow them to maintain their family and social relationship. Clearly setting out the Allowances available to all foster carers in one schedule will assist with the recruitment of carers. For prospective Connected Persons Foster Carers finances can be a barrier to them proceeding with an assessment and offering a child a home within their wider family as they have to make changes to working arrangements to accommodate the child’s needs. Establishing the Criteria would also, if assessed as meeting the criteria, potentially allow more Connected Persons Foster carers to access the additional allowance which would support them to offer a home to a child from their family when this is required.
- **Prevention** – It is imperative that children are safeguarded from harm. However, wherever possible they should be allowed the opportunity to grow up within their family which in turn supports the maintenance of friendship, schools, health practitioners etc. Sufficient numbers of BCBC foster carers are also required to prevent the need for children to be placed with high cost Independent Fostering Agencies, that are often outside of the County. As stated above this Policy will be used as part of the first steps to supporting the recruitment of foster carers and potentially providing greater financial assistance to prospective Connected Persons foster carers. In addition it should be recognised that by supporting a child to remain within their family or to maintain a school placement and friendship groups will promote greater placement stability enabling a child to achieve better outcomes.
- **Integration** – A key component of the support that is available to Foster Carers is any financial allowance that they receive. The Fostering Allowance Policy

details all allowances that Foster Carers can receive. The Policy also sets out the eligibility for receiving an “Additional Allowance”.

- **Collaboration** – Members of the Kinship Care and Permanence Team attend the Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA (Cymru) National interest group in relation to Connected Person Foster Carers and Special Guardians. This Group provides team members with an opportunity to learn about and share practice developments and best practice with colleagues across Wales.
- **Involvement** – There is regular engagement with Foster Carer throughout the year. This is the first step in undertaking a full review of Foster Carer allowances which brings all of the information together. During 2022/23 there will be further consultation and engagement as part of the next steps of this review.

## 8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications in relation to updating this report, they were outlined in the reports to Cabinet in March 2022 and July 2022.

## 9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Cabinet is requested to note that the error in the Fostering Allowances Policy as set out in paragraph 3.3 was amended and has been implemented.
- 9.2 Cabinet is also requested to note that the Policy has been further amended for 2022/23 to include the 7% increase to Foster Care Allowances agreed by Cabinet in July 2022.

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## Background documents

- None