

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	16 JANUARY 2024
Report Title:	SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING DIRECTORATE POLICIES – FOSTER WALES BRIDGEND FOSTER CARER RECORDING POLICY, AND FOSTER WALES BRIDGEND FINANCES POLICY
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	JOE BOYLE POLICY OFFICER – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules
Executive Summary:	This report outlines the process undertaken to develop the reviewed Foster Wales Bridgend Finances Policy and to develop and create the new Foster Wales Bridgend Foster Carer Recording Policy.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval of the Foster Wales Bridgend Finances policy (**Appendix 1**) and the Foster Wales Bridgend Foster Carer Recording Policy (**Appendix 2**) in order to support service provision in Bridgend County Borough Council's Fostering Service (Foster Wales Bridgend).

2. Background

- 2.1 It is a regulatory requirement under The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018, and its associated Code of Practice for Local Authority Fostering Services 2019, to have policies in place relating to Finances and also Recording for Foster Carers.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 For both policies, relevant members of the Social Services and Wellbeing directorate were engaged and provided support in the drafting of the policy content for each aspect of the fostering service.

- 3.2 The new Foster Wales Bridgend Foster Carer Recording policy has been developed to provide Foster Carers with an understanding relating to the importance of recording, along with outlining what recording is required of them, and how and where to store their records.
- 3.3 As per regulation 37 of the Code of Practice for Local Authority Fostering Services 2019, the local authority has a requirement to have a policy which details the records that are to be maintained by the Council as the provider, on both children in foster care, and foster carers themselves; the daily records that the foster carer must maintain on the foster child placed with them; and the timescales for which records must be maintained within.
- 3.4 All local authority fostering services are required to have a Finances policy. This policy has been in place since August 2022, but has been reviewed and revised in order to reflect the change in timescales for the completion of Form F assessments, the revised process to ensure regular respite breaks are taken, and for complex needs allowance decisions to be made by the team manager, rather than through the Accommodation and Permanence Panel.
- 3.5 The Finances policy has been revised to remove the specific figures relating to allowance amounts. This is because the Welsh Government review and set an increased allowance for Foster Carers each year, and so this change ensures that the policy does not become outdated due to these annual rises. The figures for Foster Carer allowances from Bridgend have been included on the Foster Wales Bridgend webpages, with links included in the policy. In 2022 Cabinet approved a recommendation to allow BCBC to exceed the allowance rates set by Welsh Government to look to increase recruitment and retention rates of Foster Carers.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (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 these policies.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Act provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with 5 ways of working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The following is a summary to show how the 5 ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report.

Involvement	These policies have been informed by the review of relevant legislation and guidance, along with meetings and discussions with relevant members for the two policies.
Long term	These policies provide Foster Carers with an understanding of what allowance they will receive and how it is paid which aims to secure the services of Foster Carers in Bridgend. The

	Recording policy supports this by ensuring they are aware of what, how and where to record.
Prevention	The policies set out to prevent poor recording standards relating to Foster Carer recording, along with preventing a loss of Foster Carers for financial reasons.
Integration	These policies will be integrated into the Social Service and Wellbeing Directorate's Foster Wales Bridgend Fostering Service.
Collaboration	These policies have been developed collaboratively by working groups involving staff from across the Social Services and Wellbeing directorate.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There is no direct impact on Climate Change through the implementation of these policies.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 These policies will enhance the Council's ability to discharge its statutory duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and relevant regulations associated with The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 and the associated Code of Practice.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Each year Welsh Government set the minimum allowance levels to be paid to Foster Carers. Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) has committed to paying that minimum level. Given that this allowance minimum rate is reviewed each year by the Welsh Government, this will have an ongoing impact upon budgets set by the Council for this area as there is no additional funding provided by Welsh Government relating to this allowance. The Cabinet Member for Social Services has the delegated authority under the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to approve any adjustments in the levels of grants, fees and allowances for Children and Young People and their carers in respect of Children's Foster Care.
- 8.2 In addition to this, the Reward Scheme relating to the "Refer a Friend" process has changed to an app-based system. Previously the scheme has rewarded Foster Carers with a £250 payment per successful referral, however an app-based system has now been adopted that manages the referral scheme as highlighted within section 5.21 of the policy. This app enables the referrer to receive points at each stage of the process which can then be cashed in for up to a maximum value of £500. The financial impact of the rewards upon the budgets set for this service area would be balanced against the positive financial impact of recruiting additional in house foster carers.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet consider and approve the reviewed Foster Wales Bridgend Financial policy at **Appendix 1**, and the new Foster Wales Bridgend Foster Carer Recording policy at **Appendix 2**.

Background documents

None