

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	18 NOVEMBER 2025
Report Title:	FOSTER WALES BRIDGEND FINANCES POLICY REVIEW
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING / DEPUTY LEADER
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 sets out the approach and actions that have been taken to review the Foster Wales Bridgend Financial Policy following an internal audit of payments relating to Fostering services in February 2025. Actions and recommendations were identified within the final report that required a policy review due to inaccuracies and the need for clarity to be given in sections of the policy to ensure appropriate action is taken towards payments made for foster carers.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the revised Foster Wales Bridgend Financial Policy (**Appendix 1**) provided by the Social Services and Wellbeing directorate.

2. Background

- 2.1 In February 2025 a Foster Carer Payments internal audit was conducted, with the final report published in April 2025. The purpose of the audit was to provide assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control, governance and risk management arrangements in respect of Foster Care Payments. Audit testing was undertaken in respect of financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 2.2 Findings from this audit, in respect of the policy, were “All policies and procedural documents should be updated to reflect the current procedures and practices in place for awarding and managing the payment of allowances and fees in respect of fostering”.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Following the issuing of the report, a policy review has been undertaken with relevant officers from Children and Family Services being involved throughout the review at the relevant opportunity.
- 3.2 In line with the full findings and recommendations the following actions and amendments have been made to the policy:
- References to Complex Needs Allowances being reviewed every three months by the Accommodation and Permanence panel have been removed as this panel no longer exists. These allowances are now referred to as Additional Needs Allowances and are subject to regular reviews and are agreed on a time-limited basis.
 - Additional needs allowances are agreed by the relevant team manager, on a case by case basis and at the discretion of the local authority.
 - Clarification has been provided throughout the policy as to what is the Foster Care Allowance, Foster Carer Fee, and the Enhanced Allowance Eligibility for Kinship Carers.
 - Processes have been clarified around the identification, investigating and recovery of overpayments, along with the identification of processes and actions to reduce the likelihood of overpayments being made.
 - The policy also now identifies who has the responsibility to waive any repayment where overpayments are found to have happened. This is the Group Manager who has the responsibility for Fostering services.
- 3.3 In addition to this, refinement and clarification has been provided to the policy to ensure the policy discussed relevant topics. Reviews found previous versions held information that was not relevant to a Financial policy, along with the need for further clarification to be given to sections due to muddled and unclear wording leading to confusion experienced by foster carers and social work staff.

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 this policy or proposal.

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	Relevant colleagues from Children and Family Services have been involved in the review of this policy.
Long term	The implementation of this policy sets out to ensure foster carers and social work staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities towards financial payments for foster carers.
Prevention	The policy sets out to prevent poor practice and inaccurate payment processes involving foster carers.
Integration	This policy will be implemented and used across the Foster Wales Bridgend service.
Collaboration	A collaborative process has been undertaken to review this policy along with looking at what is happening on a regional basis as well.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 There are no Climate Change or Nature Implications as a result of this report or policy.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The implementation of this policy will enable the Council to further its Corporate Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting responsibilities by supporting and setting out the financial approach for Foster Carers engaged by Bridgend County Borough Council to provide care and support to care experienced children and young people.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct additional financial implications arising from this report or the reviewed policy.

9. Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the implementation of the reviewed Foster Wales Bridgend Financial policy (**Appendix 1**).

Background documents

None