

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CABINET MEMBER**

**PROPOSED FOSTERING ALLOWANCES FOR THE YEAR 2023/2024**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1. To seek a Cabinet Member decision regarding an increase in the allowances paid to foster carers for the year 2023/2024.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The recruitment and retention of foster carers continues to be a key priority for the Council to enable choice, the best matches and achieve stability for children within a family.
- 2.5 The Government's recent response to the independent review of children's social care 'Stable Homes Built on Love' made the recommendation that fostering allowances should increase by 12.43% and a recent letter sent to local authorities from the Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing confirmed that the revised National Minimum Rates for fostering allowances for 2023/2024 will include this 12.43% uplift.
- 2.6 Within North Lincolnshire we have continued to recognise and acknowledge the important contribution which foster carers make in providing high quality, loving and stable homes for our children and that there is a need to ensure that they are fully supported (including financially) to continue to be able to do so. As a result a number of measures have already been agreed.
- Council tax support reimbursement payments to meet the council tax liability of foster carers whilst they have a child/children living with them. This will commence in April 2023.
  - As an interim measure, to recognise the issues carers are raising, an additional task allowance (ATA) of £25.00 to be paid weekly to foster carers. To take effect week commencing 13/02/2023 this will be until to the end of the financial year until the revised allowance rates commence.
- 2.7 The basic fostering allowance in North Lincolnshire is currently paid at two levels. Level one is paid at the national minimum rate and is paid to any newly approved carers and level two is paid following completion

of all mandatory training in recognition of the increased knowledge and skills gained. At any one time around 75% of carers are receiving the level 2 allowance.

Level One:		
Age	Current weekly rate 2022/2023	Proposed weekly rate 2023/2024 (12.43% increase)
0 - 4 years	£141.00	£159.00
5 – 10 years	£156.00	£175.00
11 – 15 years	£177.00	£200.00
16+ years	£207.00	£233.00
Level Two		
Age	Current weekly rate 2022/2023	Proposed weekly rate 2023/2024 (12.43% increase)
0 - 4 years	£161.10	£181.00
5 – 10 years	£183.85	£207.00
11 – 15 years	£233.69	£263.00
16+ years	£279.00	£314.00

### 3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 **Option 1** – To increase the allowances paid to foster carers by 12.43% in line with the national minimum recommendations for carers receiving both the level one and level two allowance.
- 3.2 **Option 2** – To increase only the level one allowance by 12.43% to ensure that the basic rate is in line with the national minimum recommendations and increase the level 2 allowance by a smaller percentage.

### 4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

#### 4.1 Option 1 -

This option will ensure that all foster carers receive an increased allowance which is in line with the Government's recommendations and also recognises and addresses the financial cost in providing the best foster care.

These allowances, alongside the wider support mechanisms already in place and proposed, demonstrate to carers the Council's commitment to ensuring that children are able to benefit from a high level of care and

love provided by well supported Foster Carers in the children's own local communities.

It is anticipated that these measures, along with the wider support offer to Foster Carers, will also contribute to enabling us to recruit and retain high quality and committed carers so that children can continue to live within their local community. Not only is this likely to achieve the best outcomes for the children but also ensures that we continue to place children with local carers who benefit from the support, help and training they receive from the Council's fostering provision.

#### 4.2 **Option 2 –**

Increasing the level 2 rate of allowances by only a lesser percentage will mean that the majority of foster carers, and all of the most experienced carers, will not benefit from the same level of increase.

This provides a potentially inconsistent message about the value of the role carried out by carers with the potential risk that more carers may seek to foster for either independent agencies or other local authorities.

### 5. **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)**

#### 5.1 Basing calculations on the current number of children living with foster carers in each of the age ranges at 15/02/2023

154 children living with foster carers with approximately 75% of foster carers at any one time receiving level 2 rates.

Aged 0 – 4 years = 26 children  
Aged 5 – 10 years = 26 children  
Aged 11 – 15 years = 56 children  
Aged 16+ years = 46 children

The proposal outlined in option 1 – to increase both levels of fostering allowance by 12.5% - will result in a projected spending increase of approximately £217,500.00 per annum.

### 6. **OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**

6.1 There are no known implications of any decisions on crime and disorder pursuant to section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

6.2 Equalities issues under the Equalities Act 2010 have been considered and there are no identified / known implications.

- 6.3 There are no known / identified environmental implications and significant risks that have been identified.
- 6.4 We continue to work within the Council's priorities as set out in the Council Plan and the proposed decision does not present a conflict to this.

**7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

- 7.1 An integrated impact assessment has not been completed with this report.

**8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

- 8.1 There are no conflicts of interest to declare for the purposes of this report.
- 8.2 The views of foster carers have been sought via consultation and discussion with members of the North Lincolnshire Foster Carer Association and their views are represented throughout this report.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 It is recommended that Option 1 is agreed and that foster carer's allowances at both level one and level two are increased by 12.43%.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

National Statistics Fostering in England – November 2022

Stable Homes Built on Love – Department for Education, February 2023