

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

DECISION NO:

24/00020

For publication [Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:
 - the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;
 - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Proposed Revisions of Rates Payable by Kent County Council for Children's Social Care Services in 2024-25

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, I agree to:

- a)
 - i. The weekly Foster Care Maintenance allowance is increased to:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| All placements under 2 years old | £197.08 |
| All placements 2 to 4 years old | £203.54 |
| All placements 5 to 10 years old | £224.00 |
| All placements 11 to 15 years old | £256.31 |
| All placements over 16 years old | £299.38 |

- ii. The weekly Foster Care Reward element is increased to:

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|--|---------|
| Non-related placements 0 to 8 years old | £144.74 |
| Non-related placements 9 to 18 years old | £274.92 |

- iii. The weekly Foster Care Disability Enhancement is increased to:

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|----------|---------|
| Standard | £82.48 |
| Enhanced | £109.97 |

- iv. The weekly Foster Care Skills Based Payment is increased to:

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|--------------------|--------|
| Skilled (Level 2) | £26.27 |
| Advanced (Level 3) | £65.62 |

v. The weekly Emergency Foster Carer Retainer payment is increased to:

| | |
|----------|---------|
| Retainer | £274.92 |
|----------|---------|

vi. The hourly Sessional & Day Care payments increase to:

| | |
|----------------|--------|
| Sessional Work | £11.94 |
| Day Care | £11.94 |

vii. The Foster Carer Mileage Rate will remain at 45p per mile in line with KCC staff.

viii. The additional rates for the Step Across to Fostering Scheme to be set at:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Settling in Period (one-off payment) | £5,000 |
| Retention Payment (4 th Month one-off payment) | £2,500 |
| Retention Payment (8 th Month one-off payment) | £2,500 |
| Retention Payment (12 th Month one-off payment) | £2,500 |
| Retention Payment (18 th Month one-off payment) | £2,500 |
| Retainer (weekly payment) | £274.92 |
| Vacant Bed (weekly payment max. 4 weeks) | £274.92 |

ix. The Kent Supported Homes (Supporting Lodging payments to hosts) is increased to:

| | |
|---|------------|
| Standard Support (per week) | £178.69 |
| Enhanced Support (per week) | £297.81 |
| Complex Support (legacy cases only) (per week) | £200.00 |
| Mother and Baby Arrangement Support (per week) | £357.37 |
| Outreach support (per hour) | £11.94 |
| Rent (16/17 year old and 18+ who are not eligible to claim benefits) (per week) | £83.38 |
| Rent (University non-term time) | LHA** rate |
| Staying Put Extended Foster Care Rate | Various** |

*LHA – Local Housing Authority

**Various – the rate will depend on circumstances and agreed in line with the Staying Put policy.

b) NOTE:

x. The rates which are dictated by external agencies i.e. Inter-agency charges and Essential Living Allowance

c) DELEGATE:

xi. Authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, or other nominated officers, to undertake the necessary actions to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Background

The rates payable by Children's Services are reviewed annually, with any revisions normally

introduced from the start of the new financial year.

Some of the increases are directly linked to the published Department for Education fostering rates, which are reviewed by the Department annually.

Financial Implications

The increase in payments and income have been reflected in the Council's budget plans presented to County Council on 19 February 2024 under the heading "Prices - Children's Social Care Disabled & Non-Disabled Children" at just over £6.6m, and "Base Budget Changes – Children's Social Care". This calculation includes an assumed uplift for all in-house fostering and associated payments.

Legal implications

The national minimum standards, together with regulations on the placement of children in foster care, such as the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering services. The report distinguishes between those rates over which Members can exercise their discretion, and those set by Government or external agencies.

Equalities implications

We have not assessed any adverse impact within these proposals to increase funding rates for children's services.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Children's and Young People Cabinet Committee considered the decision on 6th March 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The alternatives would be to either:

- Freeze the rates at 2023-24 level or apply a lower percentage increase than proposed. This was rejected on the basis that the security of an annual uplift continues to form part of Kent Fostering's approach to improving the recruitment and retention of foster carers by enabling the service to provide a more competitive package in the carer's marketplace and by not applying a reasonable uplift could put at risk this strategy.
- Apply a higher percentage uplift than propose. This was rejected on the basis that this would be unaffordable within the allocated budget.
- Continue to provide a separate one-off payment to foster carers in relation to maintenance allowance or cease the payment and not compensate with a further increase to the weekly rate. Both options were rejected. The use of the one-off payment in 2023-24 was partly driven by unexpected higher than inflationary increase applied by the DfE to the maintenance rate, therefore by incorporating it into the weekly rate aligns it to the DfE published rates. Consideration was given to not permanently increase the rate, but providing incentives to support recruitment and retention of foster carers continues to be a priority.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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signed

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date

