

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

**Sue Chandler,
Cabinet Member for Children’s integrated Services**

DECISION NO:

20/00006

Unrestricted

Key decision: **YES**

Subject: Payment increase for in house Emergency Bed Foster Carers

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, I propose to:

Agree that Kent County Council will introduce an enhanced payment structure for emergency bed placements within house foster carers. This is to strengthen the placement provision for children and young people at times of crisis and avoid young people going into residential placements.

Reason(s) for decision:

The Emergency Bed Scheme is a valuable resource provided by the Kent Fostering Service. It provides children and young people with a time limited home during a period of crisis which can include; a child/young person being placed on remand, family breakdown or a placement break down. The scheme has been in place for several years without any recent revision. The Policy aims to provide a clear and up to date framework on the roles and responsibilities within the service to ensure that the needs of a child/young person are responded to in a timely manner to achieve identification of the most appropriate home for their needs. There is a current fostering recruitment strategy which includes increasing the number of Emergency Bed carers; the revised policy and proposed payment structure will enhance our ability to attract more carers to the scheme.

The scheme has been reviewed, with a recommendation to update the current policy and implement the following changes:

- Increase the current 7-day placement limit to 10 working days
- Clarify the roles within the Integrated Children Services teams to ensure accountability and ensure appropriate support for children, young people and foster carers
- Clarify processes, timescales and authorisations for specific actions
- Introduce the ability to pay an enhanced payment to emergency bed carers for our most complex children.
- Provide an updated agreement/contract to emergency.
- bed foster carers.
- Support and enhance recruitment of foster carers to the scheme

Equality Implications

An Equality and Impact Assessment has been completed. It did not identify any areas of concern.

Financial Implications**1. Proposed Payments**

It is recognised that the Emergency Bed provision is one that requires the foster carers to work with children who present with significant complex emotional and behavioural needs and are required to be available for a placement all hours of a working day. This is therefore recognised in the proposal to increase aspects of the current payments offered in the scheme to foster carers.

a. Retainer payments

This is paid to the foster carer regardless of having children in placement to hold a bed open and be

ready for emergencies (24 hours per day). This is a proposed increase:

- i) £250 per week (the current retainer is £221.82 per week, so a proposed increase of £28.18 per week)
- ii) £35.72 per night. (an increase of £2.18 per night)

b. Payments when a child/young person is placed:

When a child is placed, both Reward and Maintenance payments are paid at the higher rate regardless of the age of the child. This will be paid as a daily rate and according to the period that the child or young person is in placement. As soon as the child leaves placement the daily payments cease.

Reward:

- i) £221.82 per week
- ii) £31.68 per night

Maintenance:

- i) £234.77 per week
- ii) £33.54 per night

There is no proposed change in the reward and maintenance payments for the emergency bed scheme.

c. Complex needs enhanced payment:

Emergency Bed foster carers are requested at times to provide a placement for children or young people whose care plan requires a more specialised environment to meet their holistic needs (i.e. residential care). When such placements are required it is recognised that foster carers are managing a significantly higher level of risk and this will be rewarded with a complex need enhanced payment. This payment would be equal to that received by carers of severely disabled children and was initially based on the higher rate of the Disability Living Allowance payments. The assessment of the complexity of need and authorisation of this payment will be agreed by the Service Manager (or delegated person) in the Total Placement Service.

- i) £87.65 per week
- ii) £12.52 per night

This would be a new payment within the KCC fostering rates and payments. All fostering payments are subject to review on an annual basis regarding increases or decreases, if applicable.

Legal Implications

There are no known legal implications to this.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

To be added after the meeting on 10 January 2019.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The only other option considered would be keeping the current payment structure and support for emergency bed foster carers unchanged, this would be a vulnerability as would not meet the current needs of the service or our young people, at a time of crisis.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

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signed

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date