

Single Member Cabinet Decision

Executive
Forward Plan
Reference

E2631

**Annual Review of Fostering, Adoptive and Special
Guardianship Allowances**

Decision maker/s	Cllr Paul Crossley, Leader of the council Cllr Dine Romero, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
The Issue	Annual review of fostering and related allowances
Decision Date	9 th April 2014
The decision	The Cabinet Members agree: (1) To increase fostering age related allowances and permanence allowances in line with Fostering Network recommendations; (2) No change in fostering level one and level two fees; (3) To increase the hourly fee of the family link as set out in the report; (4) To increase the children in care savings rates in line with local government pay (1%); (5) To increase the weekly support element to supported lodgings providers for care leavers, as set out in the report; and (6) To note the current level of care leaver's maintenance, linked to Job Seekers Allowance.
Rationale for decision	The Council has duties in statute, regulations and guidance to act as a Corporate Parent and provide placements for children in its care, to promote adoption, special guardianship and residence orders as forms of permanence and to maintain and support young people moving on from care to adulthood. The proposal in this report ensures that basic living costs for these vulnerable children and young people continue to be met by the Council acting as Corporate Parent.
Financial and budget implications	It is our practice to increase the fostering age related allowances in line with that recommended by the Fostering Network. For 2014-15 this is a 2.3% increase. This inflationary increase (measured by Consumer Prices Index) has been incorporated in the MTSRP for Children's Service as part of the social growth items. There have been significant Court rulings relating to how permanence allowances are to be calculated and this will increase the costs of providing these allowances. Care leavers maintenance is linked to Job Seekers Allowance rates in line with regulations and guidance.
Issues considered	Social Inclusion; Young People; Equality; Human Rights; Other Legal Considerations
Consultation undertaken	Service Users; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer The Divisional Director for Children & Young People's Specialist Services and the People and Communities Finance and Resources Manager cleared the report for publication.

<p>Other options considered</p>	<p>A revised local scheme of fees and allowances for foster carers was introduced in April 2005. Our age related allowances since 2005 have been based on the Fostering Network recommended rates and thus cover the full direct and additional costs of looking after a child in foster care. This was based on the Council's commitment to meet the full cost of looking after children for whom we are the Corporate Parent. Foster carers face day to day costs which increase or decrease in line with inflation, and this is taken into account by the Fostering Network in making its recommendation. Reducing or freezing allowances for Bath and North East Somerset carers against the Fostering Network recommendation would depart from the Council's 2005 commitment to cover the full costs to foster carers of looking after children and effectively ask carers to subsidise these costs. This option would risk significant damage to our efforts to recruit and retain local carers. The scheme of fees introduced in 2005 recognises the skills of foster carers. These fees ensure competitiveness with Independent Providers and continue with the effective growth of our in-house provision.</p>
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<p>Signatures of Decision Makers</p>	<p>Cllr Dine Romero</p>	<p>Cllr Paul Crossley</p>
<p>Date of Signature</p>		

Subject to Call-in until 5 Working days have elapsed following publication of the decision