



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

SUBJECT: Changes to the Financial Policy Fostering Service - March 2014

PURPOSE OF ATTACHED REPORT:

To make recommendations to include changes to the Fostering Financial Policy April 2014.

DELEGATED DECISION (Date):

The Council pays a retainer to Foster Carers for no longer than three months where there is no Child/Young Person in Placement.

There is no uplift to Foster Carer Fees in 2014, however, allowances will be increased in line with Welsh Government minimum allowances.

Chief Officer Signature

Neil Elliott

Print Name

10/4/14.

Date

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

Annette Davies

10.4.2014

CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

DATE

A.V. Gwynn

10/4/14

OFFICER CONSULTEE SIGNATURE

DATE

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2013-14
REPORT TO ACCOMPANY DECISION OF
GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Part 1 (Non-Confidential)

Changes to the Financial Policy Fostering Service March 2014

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To make recommendations to include changes to the Fostering Financial Policy April 2014.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, this report has been prepared to accompany the intended Officer decision of the Group Director, Community and Children's Services as described below.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The Council pays a retainer to Foster Carers for no longer than three months where there is no Child/Young Person in Placement. Currently there is no time limit in place, any Foster Carers who currently receive the retainer payment will be given three months notice should the policy be agreed. No other South Wales Local Authority pays a retainer for longer than three months and many do not pay any retainer if there is no Child/Young Person in placement.
- 2.2 There is no uplift to Foster Carer Fees in 2014, however, allowances will be increased in line with Welsh Government minimum allowances. Rhondda Cynon Taf is generous with its fees compared to some neighbouring Local Authorities and has awarded inflationary uplifts in previous years



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FOSTERING SERVICE FINANCIAL POLICY

AUTHOR: Gareth Edwards
AUTHOR'S TITLE: Service Improvement Office
DATE OF POLICY (original version): April 2009

AUTHOR OF REVISION Ann-Marie Browning
REVISER'S TITLE Children's Service Manager
DATE OF REVISION January 2014
REVISION NUMBER 3

Introduction

This Policy sets out Rhondda-Cynon-Taf County Borough Council's agreed foster carer remuneration scheme. The policy establishes the clear principles and eligibility for all financial payments made by the Local Authority to its foster carers.

This Policy replaces all previous policy documents which outline remuneration to RCT foster carers.

Section 1 - Foster Carers Allowances and Fees

Legal Context

- 1.1 Section 23(2) of the Children Act 1989 enables Local Authorities to determine the amount of payment it makes to Foster Carers with whom they place children and Section 49 of the Children Act 2004 enables the Welsh Assembly, in relation to Local Authorities in Wales to stipulate the amount of such payments though to date this power has not been exercised. On 1st April 2011 Welsh Government introduced statutory guidance on minimum fostering allowances. RCT has implemented this guidance and provides all foster carers with the agreed national minimum allowance rates for looked after children. This allowance is paid to reimburse the Foster Carer for the direct costs of caring for the child. This payment is treated for Income Tax purposes as earnings of the Foster Carer however; Foster Carers can claim extra tax relief (qualifying care relief – please refer to www.hmrc.gov.uk for further information).
- 1.2 Whilst there is no legal requirement to pay foster carers an additional fee for their time, skill and commitment, most local authorities have developed schemes whereby Foster Carers may be paid fees over and above the national minimum allowance in recognition of their undertaking obligations over and above the basic care of the child.
- 1.3 RCT is aware of National and Local trends in payments to Foster Carers and as such regularly reviews its fee based scheme to ensure that carers skills as a foster carer are recognised.
- 1.4 RCT provides a fee to approved mainstream carers who are expected to meet requirements for training and availability for placements. Probationary foster carers, mainstream foster carers and Level 5 carers receive a fee depending on their compliance with the requirements set out for training and availability of placements.
- 1.5 RCT also approves Kinship foster carers, where a child placed is a member of the family or known to the carers. Kinship carers receive the national minimum allowances, but do not receive a fee.

2.1 Emergency Clothing Allowance

Foster carers may receive an Initial clothing grant when a child is placed. This is subject to an assessment by the child's social worker of the child's initial clothing needs at the point of placement. The rates are as follows:

- 0-10 years £130.00
- 11+ years £200.00

2.2 QCF allowances

All approved Foster carers who have successfully completed the QCF award in Health and Social Care (Children and Young People), level 3, will receive an additional allowance of £40 per fortnight.

Carers are able to access this training, whether they are Kinship or Mainstream foster carers, once they have gained a minimum of 6 months experience as a foster carer.

Section 3 - Fee Levels

3.1 Allocation of Fee Levels

The Fostering Team Manager will determine the appropriate Level at which foster Carers will be approved. Most newly approved Foster Carers will enter the service at Probationary level. Applicants who come forward to foster specific children already known to them will be approved as Kinship Foster Carers.

3.2 Where an applicants can demonstrate that they meet the criteria for higher levels, for instance as a result of transferring from another fostering agency or by way of recognition of previous appropriate professional experience, the Fostering Manager will consider allocation immediately to Mainstream fostering fee level.

3.3 Carers can seek a review of the Fostering Manager's decision through the Head of Service.

3.4 The Table below sets out the additional payments, over and above the National Minimum Allowance, which will be paid to Approved Foster Carers approved with effect from 1st April 2013

Fees paid	Fortnightly Payment per placement
Kinship Carers	£ 0.00
Probationary Carers	£220.00

Fee related Expectations

Approval Level	Training requirements	Placements	Other Tasks
Kinship Carers	None The generic training programme is available for those wishing to attend.	Kinship carers are approved for specific children or where there is a previously established relationship between the carer and the child.	Supervision/support sessions. The Foster Carer will not be expected to care for unknown children but will agree to undertake a fostering role for a specific child.
Probationary Carers	20 hrs per annum	Take children, following matching considerations undertaken with the placement officer. The Approved Carer may not refuse more than 5 such placements within their approval range.	Attend support groups /supervision sessions
Mainstream Carers	30 hrs per annum	Take children, following matching considerations undertaken with the placement officer. The Approved Carer may not refuse more than 2 such placements within their approval range.	Attend support groups /supervision sessions Buddying other foster carers as agreed Assisting with recruitment of carers
Level 5 Also includes specific Family Link Carers	As mainstream but with the additional requirement to achieve NVQ 3 within 2 years of approval. As a Level 5 carer, there	To take a child as directed within approval range. To be available to care for a child on a full time basis. Family Link The carers are expected to provide regular short breaks for up to 8 children	As Mainstream

	training programme is available for those able to attend.		
Daytime Respite (no fee payment)	Mandatory training as discussed with worker and the generic training programme is available for those able to attend.	Available to offer day time support.	Supervision sessions

Review of fee levels

- 3.6 A Foster Carer's fee level will be reviewed annually as part of the Carer's annual review. Carer's fee level can be reduced if a carer has not carried out the expectations required for training hours and/or placements.
- 3.7 When the revised scheme was introduced in October 2007, transitional arrangements were put in place to enable existing carers ("Career" and "Mainstream") to opt out of the new scheme and continue to remain on their previous agreements. Whilst these transitional arrangements are still in place in relation to those who decided to opt out at the time, this arrangement is not available to newly approved carers. It is the intention of the Local Authority to phase out these 'old' schemes when carers either resign/retire from the service or apply to join the revised scheme in the future. As a result, once carers have opted into the revised scheme there is no longer the opportunity to revert back onto the old scheme fees.
- 3.8 Those who have opted out of the revised scheme are paid the following fee rates. These fees do not receive an annual uplift.
- "Mainstream" Carers £140 per fortnight per child
- "Career" Carers £325 per fortnight per child
- 3.9 Some carers who transferred to the revised scheme are eligible for an additional "detriment" payment to cover any reduction in remuneration they incurred as a result of changing their fostering agreements. This payment acts as a top up fee to maintain the same level of remuneration provided the carer continues to look after the same number of children.

Further guidance regarding claims for transport is provided in the Frequently Asked Questions Guidance available from the fostering service.

4.8 Subsistence

- 4.9 Subsistence allowances will be considered only where a foster carer has had prior written agreement to undertake duties outside of the normal fostering work pattern and outside a 50-mile radius from the carer's home.
- 4.10 Where it is the opinion of the fostering manager that subsistence is warranted, then arrangements should be arranged by Business Support within the fostering service.
- 4.11 Subsistence rates if eligible should not exceed the following:

Overnight stay (based on single occupancy)

London	£90.43
Elsewhere	£79.26

Subsistence rate

Breakfast	£5.40
Lunch	£7.43
Evening Meal	£7.21

Travel

Equivalent of 2nd class rail travel

If carers choose to travel using private transport petrol receipts will be required although carers will only be entitled to claim up to the equivalent of 2nd class rail travel.

Section 5 - Retainer Payments to carers.

- 5.1 RCT Council recognises that foster carers are increasingly choosing to foster as an alternative to some other form of paid employment. Therefore, a retainer payment will be paid up to a maximum period of three months to ensure carers receive an income when there are gaps between placements.
- 5.2 Foster carers must continue to be available to take a placement in order to continue to receive their allocated fee payment regardless of whether a child is in placement. If carers are unavailable for considering placements they should inform their supervising social worker as soon as possible.
- 5.3 If a carer has not been offered a placement then the full fee will be paid as a retainer payment until a suitable placement is identified up to a maximum period of three months. Foster carer's will receive a retainer payment equal to the fee for one placement, regardless of the number of placements the carer is approved to offer.

- 5.4 If a carer has not provided a placement for a period of three months the retainer fee will no longer be paid. The foster carer may be referred to the Foster panel for a review of their approval to consider the reasons why no placements have been made during the three month preceding period; Fostering panel may consider whether a carer is still able to continue offering a service.

Section 6 - Appendix

6.1 Remand Fostering

Remand placements provide temporary care for a child aged 10-17. Young people requiring remand placements have committed an offence and are waiting for their cases to be dealt with by the Courts. The RCT Youth Offending Service is involved working with the young person. The Placement length is usually fixed by the Court or is dependent on the progress of the criminal proceedings.

6.2 Family Link

A Family Link placement provides planned regular short breaks specifically for a child with a learning and or physical disability. The breaks are usually on weekends or after school. The Family Link scheme also runs a Level 5 scheme. These carers are expected to provide regular short breaks for up to 8 children in a week. They also receive additional payments equivalent to the age appropriate allowances.

6.3 Support Care

Support care provides planned short stays to support families who are experiencing difficulties and may be at risk of family breakdown. The intention of support care is to support the family to prevent a breakdown in relationships resulting in longer term fostering or care options.

Those carers who are unable to make a regular commitment to a minimum of 4 nights per month are not paid a fee for offering this service.

Additional fees are payable if more than one child is looked after and each child is in placement for a minimum of 4 nights per month.

Allowances are paid on a pro rata basis depending on the age of the child and the duration of the stay.

Carers who provide a higher level of skills and understanding are assessed as Support Care Plus.

A payment for providing daytime respite is paid where carers are looking after other fostered children to allow their colleagues to attend appropriate meetings such as training, or in an emergency.