

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE DECISION MEETING**

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care Decision Meeting held on Thursday, 7 July 2016 at 4.00 pm in Conference Room B, Civic Offices, Portsmouth

### **Also Present**

Councillors Alicia Denny  
John Ferrett  
Rob Wood

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **2. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest. However, Councillor Wood wished to record that his son-in-law works for the Harbour School, his daughter works for Motiv8 and his Step Grandson works for the Housing team.

#### **3. Foster Carer Allowance Review**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Richard Webb, Finance Manager and Kate Freeman, Looked After Children Service Commissioning Manager, introduced the report.

Richard Webb advised that the implementation date for the new policy would be 31 July, and not 1 August as stated in the report, as this needed to start on a Sunday.

In response to questions the following points were clarified by officers:

- Based on the February 2016 cohort of carers and looked after children, the estimated financial impact of the changes to the level 3 skill fees, holiday, birthday and festivity allowances would amount to a saving of circa £(34,000) annually. With the application of the proposed transitional protection for the Level 3 carers currently caring for children aged 0 to 10, the financial impact of these arrangements would lead to an overall cost of circa £22,000 annually.
- Foster carers were consulted and their feedback was taken on board as shown at Appendix 2. Some of the feedback resulted in changes to the proposal and the LA believe they have generally maintained satisfaction with foster carers.
- The driver for the changes was to ensure equity across allowances .

- The level 3 skill fee that Hampshire County Council has in place is just above £300 so this proposal would be fairly in line with them.
- The new policy would be closely monitored.
- Regarding concerns that only 22 responses were received to the consultation, officers advised that there are 170 carers at any time. The proposals have been discussed at the quarterly liaison meetings. Individual discussions have also take place with the specific foster carers affected so that they are fully aware of the proposed changes.
- There is a quality assurance process with regard to foster carers setting up bank accounts for young people and carers can be held to account if they are not doing this. The individual reviewing officers will report, if a young person's savings are not being used properly.

**DECISION: the Cabinet Member**

- (1) **Approved the revised policy (including the scale of allowances and fees table) at Appendix 1, with effect from 31 July 2016, and specifically noted the following key changes:**
  - i. **The proposal to amend the Level 3 skill fee, in order to introduce a flat rate skill fee of £300 across all age bands.**
  - ii. **The proposal to adjust the holiday, birthday and festivity allowances, in order to bring them in line with the Standard Fostering Allowance (SFA). The 'annual school holiday' allowance will be equivalent to two weeks of the SFA, whilst the Birthday & Festivity Allowance will each be aligned to the equivalent of one week SFA.**
  - iii. **The proposal to introduce a new payments scheme for Parent and Child placements, which is aligned to the fostering and 'lodgings plus' payment rates.**
  - iv. **The expectation that Disability Living Allowance will be used to meet the extra costs of caring for a disabled child.**
  - v. **The inclusion of the 'Staying Put' allowances within the revised policy document.**
  
- (2) **Agreed that for Level 3 carers who are currently caring for children between the ages of 0 and 10, they will continue to receive the current Level 3 fees for those children currently in placement, whilst they continue to care for them, until they reach the age of 11. Any new placements with these carers would be undertaken at the new rates.**
  
- (3) **Agreed that foster carers will receive the child savings amount within their weekly payment and that they will now be expected to set up the child bank accounts and ensure that the savings are appropriately deposited for the children in their care.**
  
- (4) **Agreed that the Deputy Director of Children's Services - Safeguarding in consultation with the S.151 officer, may adjust the Standard Fostering Allowance in line with changes to the Government Minimum Fostering Allowance - South East; having consulted with carers.**

#### **4. Children's Social Care Budget Outturn**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The report was introduced by Richard Webb, Finance Manager.

In response to questions the following points were clarified by Richard Webb and Sarah Newman:

- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are generally adolescent males who arrive through the port and they are placed in appropriate provision for their needs. This might be a foster placement, support lodgings or hostel. The National Voluntary Dispersal Scheme came into force on 1 July and stipulates that each authority should have 0.07% UASC per 10,000 child population. Portsmouth should therefore be allocated 33 however we currently have 35 UASC's. Therefore if any more UASC's arrive the council can ask colleagues in neighbouring local authorities to help.
- Currently the net cost of supporting both UASC and the related care leavers is estimated circa £640,000 a year.
- With the increase in the rate of funding from central government for new UASC arrivals from 1 July 2016, the net cost for supporting these new children is expected to be less.

#### **DECISION: The Cabinet Member**

- (1) **Noted the Children's Social Care portfolio outturn position for 2015/16, of £1.398m in excess of the approved cash limit provision.**
- (2) **Noted the ongoing budget pressures within the portfolio, and the need for continued action to reduce the expenditure of Children's Social Care service so that it can operate within its authorised cash limit for 2016-17.**

#### **5. Bi-annual adoption report**

(TAKE IN INFORMATION REPORT)

The report was introduced by Sarah Newman, Deputy Director of Children's Social Care.

In response to questions the following points were clarified:

- There is still room for improvement on the adoption scorecard. It should be noted however that rather than placing children in long term foster care the council has taken longer and found children a permanent home. The indicators also do not show that the council have been finding placements for children with complex needs.
- Officers have been working with the court to better understand the delays in court proceedings and have worked with them to improve the process.
- The Council has a very good success record for keeping siblings together but as it is harder to adopt sibling groups, this has an effect on performance indicators.

The Cabinet Member noted the report.

Councillor Brent thanked officers for all their reports.

The meeting concluded at 5.00 pm.

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Councillor Ryan Brent  
Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care