

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board Sub Committee  
**DATE:** 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Children and Enterprise  
**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People and Families  
**SUBJECT:** Foster Care Allowances 2012-13  
**WARD:** Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To seek agreement to the level of allowances to be paid to foster carers in 2012-13

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the recommended level of increase in allowances is agreed.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 As part of the department's Placement Strategy for Children in Care, the level of allowance paid to Halton foster carers was increased in September 2010.

3.2 This was done for a number of reasons, but was ultimately aimed at increasing the number of foster carers available within the borough and supporting their retention. Improved finance was just one component of investment in the service which included an improved range of support to carers, more training opportunities and improved engagement in service developments.

3.3 The recruitment of carers continues to represent a challenge and whilst 10 carers have been approved since January 2011, 12 carers have been withdrawn for various reasons. The recruitment position therefore remains challenging.

3.4 However, whilst the number of carers remains a challenge, the quality of the pool of carers available is now better than in previous years and is better able to meet the needs of our children.

3.5 It therefore remains important that the allowances paid to carers are appropriate, competitive and attractive.

3.6 The proposed revised allowances are contained within Appendix 1. It is important that the allowances paid to carers are increased to reflect actual costs incurred by them and it is therefore proposed that all allowances are increased by 4% (rounded down to the nearest pound).

## **4.0 RAISING ASPIRATIONS**

- 4.1 The recruitment and retention of a sufficient number of foster carers will significantly contribute to improving social, emotional, health and educational outcomes for Children in Care.

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 A sufficient number and quality of foster carers is essential in order to meet the Council's Sufficiency Duty.
- 5.2 Additional carers will result in more placement choice for Children in Care which will be reflected in improved stability of placement.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

Foster carers are a key resource in ensuring that children in care achieve positive outcomes

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

Stable, local placements contribute to a young person's ability to sustain education and employment and to achieve their potential.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Placements within a family setting are recognised as being beneficial to children in care and contributing to good physical and emotional health.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Stable placements within a family and within their own community can positively impact as a young person's ability to develop as a socially aware citizen, able to protect themselves and others.

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Improving outcomes for children in care will enhance their ability to contribute productively to the borough

## **7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The failure to recruit and retain foster carers has a significant impact on Council budgets.
- 7.2 If in house foster care is not available then provision in the independent sector has to be sourced. This can be 3 times as expensive as the average cost of an in house placement.
- 7.3 Due to a lack of carers in 2009, Halton had 32 placements with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). At an average cost of £840 per week per placement, this represented expenditure of almost £27k per

week, £1.4m per year.

7.4 The situation in October 2011 is very different, there are 9 IFA placements, 4 of which will end shortly, with a predicted expenditure of £355k per year.

7.5 The proposal to raise allowances by 4% will cost approx. £64,541. However, the failure to recruit and retain our own carers may result in the purchase of expensive IFA placements, where just 1 placement would cost, on average, £44,000. It is important that our current position is not reversed.

## **8.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

8.1 The increase is needed due to the general increase in the cost of living and preferential rates being offered in the independent sector.

8.2 Failure to maintain appropriate, competitive and attractive allowances may result in a lower level of recruitment and difficulties with retention.

8.3 Insufficient in house foster carers and the resulting need to purchase provision externally will have a very significant impact on the Council's budget

## **9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

9.1 Maintaining good quality foster carers in sufficient numbers is essential to ensuring that the needs of Children in Care are met and that they are given the best opportunities to achieve in line with their peers

## **10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Halton Strategy for Children in Care 2011-14	Grosvenor House	Christine Taylor
Placement Strategy	Grosvenor House	Christine Taylor
Equality Impact Assessment	Grosvenor House	Christine Taylor

## Appendix 1

<b>Budget</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2012-13 (Proposed)</b>
Basic/Holiday/Xmas	£1,488,720	£1,548,269
Other allowances	£124,810	£129,802
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,613,530</b>	<b>£1,678,071</b>

### Allowances

#### Current

	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Birthday</b>	<b>Xmas</b>	<b>Holiday</b>
0-4	240.00	125.00	125.00	250.00
5-15	280.00	150.00	150.00	330.00
16-17	320.00	200.00	200.00	430.00

#### Proposed

	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Birthday</b>	<b>Xmas</b>	<b>Holiday</b>
0-4	250.00	130.00	130.00	260.00
5-15	291.00	156.00	156.00	343.00
16-17	332.00	208.00	208.00	447.00