

SALFORD CITY COUNCIL - RECORD OF DECISION

I, John Warmisham, Lead Member for Children's Services, in exercise of the powers conferred on me by Paragraph D(4)(a)(cvii) of the Scheme of Delegation of the Council do hereby approve the following to changes to the Foster Care Fees and Allowances Scheme:

1. Introduction of 2 levels of Holiday Allowance, a higher rate applicable when foster carers take children on holiday in school holiday periods, and a lower rate applicable when foster carers take children on holiday during the school term.
2. Increase in the maximum amount payable in any one year for school trips to £200 for primary school age children and £400 for secondary school age children.
3. Replacing the current Initial Clothing Allowance system with a simplified Essential Clothing Allowance, whereby foster carers who take children new to being looked after by the council automatically receive a sum equivalent to one weeks' basic allowance with their first payment for the child and can then claim the equivalent of a further week's allowance within six weeks of the placement start to cover the cost of essential clothing items, including school uniform. Foster carers will be able to claim the second part of the allowance by submitting the appropriate form to the finance team supported by receipts.
4. Removing the requirement for foster carers to make claims on their own household insurance policies for loss or damage caused in their homes by young people before reimbursement by the Directorate is considered.
5. Application of a 2.5% inflationary increase to the Continuing Care Allowance.

The reasons are:

1. The proposed two tier structure for Holiday Allowance supports the Directorate's strategy to improve the educational attainments of looked after children by ensuring minimal disruption to their education. Foster carers are actively discouraged from taking children out of school for holidays but often do so because of the increased cost of holidays during school holiday periods.

Additional financial support will assist in ensuring absences due to holidays are kept to a minimum.

2. The cost of school trips has risen since the limits were set in 2003. The Directorate wishes to encourage looked after children's inclusion and participation in school opportunities, educational trips and activities.
3. The current system of Initial Clothing Allowance is cumbersome and unwieldy and a source of frustration to both foster carers and staff. At present there are delays in payment due the system of submission and authorisation of claims. Some foster carers claim large amounts of clothing allowance through the year despite the basic allowance including an element for clothing while other foster carers do not submit claims at all. The new system of Essential Clothing Allowance is simpler and more transparent and reduces the amount of staff time involved. It supports our strategy of reducing discretionary allowances paid to foster carers as basic allowance rates increase.
4. The requirement for foster carers to claim on their household policies prior to claiming from the Directorate means that there has to be police involvement in incidents for a crime number to be obtained. This can result in young people receiving criminal charges and is not consistent with other strategies to reduce the number of looked after young people with criminal convictions.
5. Continuing Care allowance is an important means of ensuring ongoing care arrangements for young people in foster carer who are not ready to live independently at the age of 18. Foster Carers making this commitment are already disadvantaged by losing their skills payment for the young person at 18 years and it is vital that the basic payment does not fall behind.

Options considered and rejected were:

Maintaining the current systems for the allowances listed above would not support Directorate strategies with regard to education, foster carer retention, criminal behaviour or leaving care support.

The source of funding is:

Costs are covered within the current Foster Care budget.

Assessment of Risk:

As above.

Legal advice obtained from

N/A

Financial advice obtained from

John Hamson (prudential code)

The following documents have been used to assist the decision process. (If the documents disclose exempt or confidential information, they should not be listed, but the following wording shall be inserted :"(The relevant documents contain exempt or confidential information and are not available for public inspection)" : -

Foster Care Fees and Allowances booklet – to be revised in the light of changes detailed.

Contact Officer: Carolyn Williams

Tel. No: 0161 603 4372

PTO

- * This matter is also subject to consideration by the Lead Member for/Director of and, accordingly, has been referred to that Lead Member/Director for a decision
- * This decision is not subject to consideration by another Lead Member/Director
- * This document records a key decision, but the matter was not included in the Council's Forward Plan and it has been dealt with under the emergency procedure
- * This decision is urgent and is not subject to call-in, in accordance with paragraph 5 of the Decision Making Procedure Rules.

* The appropriate Scrutiny Committee to call-in the decision is the
.....Scrutiny Committee.

Key

* Tick boxes at end of these lines, as appropriate.

Signed *S. J. Warrington* Dated *2/4/07*
Lead Member/Director

FOR COMMITTEE SERVICES USE ONLY.

* This decision was published on*20m April, 2007*.....

* This decision will come into force on #*30m April, 2007*.....
unless it is called-in in accordance with the Decision Making Process Rules

Key

Insert date five working days after decision notice is to be published.