

Cabinet



Date of meeting:	08 July 2024
Title of Report:	Foster for Plymouth: Foster Carer Summit and Council Tax Allowance
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Karen Blake, Head of Service Children, Young People and Families Service
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Your Reference:	
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

On 07 November 2023 the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee met to consider the item 'Council Tax Exemption for Plymouth City Council Foster Carers' following an amendment to a Motion on Notice heard at Council on 18 September 2023.

Following a thorough discussion by the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, they agreed to recommend to Cabinet 'that a Council Tax Exemption for foster carers is considered following the conclusion of the consultation on proposed new support and retention offer to our Foster Carers'.

At the meeting of Cabinet on 11 December 2023, Cabinet agreed to:

1. Thank the Education and Children's Social Care and Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their proposal of a council tax exemption for foster carers;
2. Note the recommendations from the committee and commit to providing an update on the issue at an appropriate future meeting of the Committee, once the entire revised package of support for Plymouth City Council foster carers had been agreed.

Plymouth City Council held a Foster Carer summit on 31 January 2024 to consider and co-design a new and improved support and retention offer to our Foster Carers. Three elements of the financial offer progressed within phase one and the wider support and development element of the offer would progress within phase two.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. To note the content of the report and the work undertaken to support Plymouth City Council's Foster Carers;
2. Endorse a new foster carers financial package that includes a Council Tax Allowance within the agreed 2024/25 financial envelope;
3. Note the annual uplift to the Fostering Allowances since 01 April 2024, of 6% (including the new reward payment) and the commitment to continued annual reviews of allowances in line with the financial year;
4. Note the uplift in Festival, Birthday and Holiday Allowances since 01 April 2024;
5. Note the work being undertaken in Phase two, to co-design the support and retention offer to Plymouth City Council's Foster Carers;
6. Endorse the co-design of the support and retention offer.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. No alternative options considered. The Foster Carer Summit highlighted the need for a support and retention package to maintain the number of foster carers by Plymouth City Council. The work would significantly contribute to in-house fostering sufficiency and reduce the overall placement budget.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

This recommendation aligns to the Council's mission and values of Democracy, Responsibility, Fairness and Cooperation as set out in the Corporate Plan. The support and retention package would help to keep children and communities safe.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The projected costs per financial year have been factored in to the budget.

This recommendation is key to the work undertaken to increase in house fostering sufficiency and reduce the overall placement budget.

On top of the placement costs, there will be a positive financial impact in placing a greater number of our children in care in or close to Plymouth as there will be reduced travel and costs for the child, their family, the social worker and IRO.

Financial Risks

This is an invest to save proposal and relies on the recruitment of new Foster Carers, the transfer of existing IFA Foster Carers and the retention of existing in-house foster carers to make savings to the overall placement budget.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

There will be a positive environmental impact if we are able to place a greater number of our children in care in or close to Plymouth as there will be reduced travel for the child, their family, the social worker and IRO.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

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Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	CH.2 4.25.0 12	Leg	LS/00 0013 12/1/ AC/3/ 7/24	Mon Off		HR	CS.24 .25.01 0	Assets		Strat Proc	
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Haley (Director for Children's Services)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 01/07/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications)											
Date approved: 04/07/2024											