

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 18th MARCH, 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

INCREASE IN NATIONAL MINIMUM FOSTERING ALLOWANCE 2010-11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report recommends that the increase in National Minimum Fostering Allowances of £90,000 for 2010-11 be approved and be funded from Balances.

1.0 Background

Cabinet agreed to increase fostering and adoption allowances to the National Minimum Allowance from September 2008 (*Cabinet Minute 182 04.09.08*). This is the basic allowance that foster carers should receive to cover the costs of caring for a child on behalf of the Local Authority. It is a benchmark for the minimum payment rate, which any foster carer should be able to expect. This rate does not include foster fees.

The allowances are part of the strategy to build fostering capacity and provide secure, stable placements that lead to permanence for children. This links to the key performance indicator to safely reduce the number of looked after children. Achieving a reduction in the numbers of looked after children is central to the department's efficiency target and financial plan.

Allowances

National guidance proposes that in 2010-11 the average allowances will increase by 2.5% as set out below

Weekly rates	Baby	Pre - Primary	Primary	Secondary 11-15	Secondary 16-17
	£	£	£	£	£
2009-10	106	108	119	137	159
2010-11	109	111	122	140	164

The increases in allowances are estimated to cost £90,000. However Cabinet has determined that there is no provision for price inflation in the 2010-11 budget.

2.0 Financial Implications

To continue paying foster carers the National Minimum Allowance rates will need to increase by 2.5% on average in 2010-11 and there is no funding identified for this within the Children and Young People's Department Budget.

If this increase were not to be implemented not only would national guidance be breached but there would be implications for foster care recruitment and retention. This in turn would lead to more use of higher cost agency support.

There is no proposal to increase foster fees in 2010-11.

3.0 Staffing Implications

There are none.

4.0 Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

- 4.1 Foster care is available to all children/young people subject to an assessment that is the most appropriate way of meeting their needs.
- 4.2 Foster carers, Special Guardians and Adopters are recruited from all sectors of the community.
- 4.3 Article 8 (respect for family life) is particularly pertinent in consideration of the rights of children to be placed in a family setting wherever possible.

5.0 Community Safety Implications

- 5.1 The aim of providing secure and stable foster placements and permanence to children/young people in care, is consistent with the aims of reducing offending and diverting young people from anti social behaviour.

6.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 6.1 The foster care service is committed to challenging the social exclusion experienced by children in care.
- 6.2 The increased development of a range of locally based foster care placements reduces travel by parents, carers and social workers.

7.0 Planning Implications

- 7.1 There are none.

8.0 Anti-poverty Implications

- 8.1 The National Minimum Fostering Allowance are part of the drive against child poverty.

9.0 Social Inclusion Implications

- 9.1 The National Minimum Fostering Allowance contributes to children in care being able to fully participate in activities and interests in the community.

10.0 Local Member Support Implications

- 10.1 Children/young people placed with foster carers come from all Wards on the Wirral.
- 10.2 Foster Carers, Special Guardians and Adopters live in all Wards on the Wirral.

11.0 Background Papers

- 11.1 Cabinet report 12th June 2008.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That

- (1) The National Minimum Foster Care Allowances be paid in 2010-11
- (2) The estimated cost of £90,000 be approved and funded from Balances.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services