

Diversity impact assessment

TITLE
Fostering Fees Policy
DATE
03.01.25
LEAD OFFICER.
Kelly Cogger – Assistant Director, Children’s Services

1. Summary description of the proposed change

What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed?
How does it compare with the current situation?

The policy is a change to the fees paid to foster carers, connected carers, staying put carers and supported homes hosts.

The proposed fee change would see greater remuneration for Medway registered carers compared with 2021, when the policy was last reviewed. This review expands the current offer to Medway’s carers and seeks to support the recruitment of carers by creating an improved offer, with a fee structure that is competitive when compared to our neighbouring local authority and other local authorities across the southeast.

Currently the fee policy is out of date, the level of financial support for children, young adults and their carers fall short of other authorities in many areas which creates an added barrier to recruitment and is significantly behind the rates paid to foster carers at Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA’s) who are the biggest recruitment competition for us within Medway. There are more Other Local Authority children placed with IFA’ foster carers in Medway compared to Medway children at a ratio of close to 3:1.

It is worth mentioning that foster carers, connected carers, supported homes hosts and staying put carers are not employees of Medway Council. They are self-employed, and as such employment rights will differ.

2. Summary of evidence used to support this assessment

Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user.

Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile

The Fostering Service has held consultation with foster carers. There has been an in-person session which all carers were invited to. There has been discussion at two support groups, which again, all foster carers are invited to. A draft of the fee policy has been sent out to all foster carers and their feedback has been requested.

Foster carers have made their views known via the above mechanisms. The feedback received has been overall from carers who specifically support children aged 0-4 years. A group of 10 households have sent collective feedback to the effect that they do not agree that the reward element of the fostering fee should be less than other age groups. They hold the collective

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view that there should be parity amongst all age groups and that the fees being paid to carers of younger children are aged 0-4 are unfairly different and low.

In creating this policy there has been a benchmarking exercise, which has again been repeated in December 2024. The proposed fees are exceeding the government's National Minimum Allowance to foster carers, the comparative fees are greater than our neighbouring Local Authority and are competitive across the sector within the south east.

3. What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to:

Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

(insert Yes when there is an impact or No when there isn't)

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	No	No	Yes
Disability	No	No	Yes
Gender reassignment	No	No	Yes
Marriage/civil partnership	No	No	Yes
Pregnancy/maternity	No	No	Yes
Race	No	No	Yes
Religion/belief	No	No	Yes
Sex	No	No	Yes
Sexual orientation	No	No	Yes
Other (eg low income groups)	No	Yes	Yes

4. Summary of the likely impacts

Who will be affected?

How will they be affected?

The changes in the policy are a universal change and as such there is likely to be no difference in term of the impact on diversity. Within the fostering service there are separate recruitment campaigns which improve the diversity of our carers and further recruit foster carers from the global majority population. This policy change will support that recruitment objective, but not define it.

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There is potential that those in low-income groups could be better off through becoming assessed as foster carers, including those within Medway's own social housing, but the assessment and approval of such carers is subject to rigor around their individual circumstances.

This is relevant to all protected characteristics, the recruitment and assessment of foster carers does not discriminate based on protected characteristics, their assessment as suitable foster carers would be based on an individual's capacity to provide a safe and loving home for children where their needs are met.

The improved policy should foster good relations with all protected groups by improving remuneration universally.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?

Are there alternative providers?

Can demand for services be managed differently?

No assessed action is needed at this time.

6. Action plan

Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date

7. Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be: to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate, consider alternatives, gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

The recommendation is to proceed with the change in policy.

This is a universal change that will not adversely affect the current pool of foster carers, it will be an improvement on the current fee and allowance structure for all. Whilst we are aware that some carers would like further improvements, particularly those who care for younger children, those children's allowance is an improved offer as is the professional fee to the carers. There is universal improvement for all carers.

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8. Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that the recommendation can be implemented, sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned, the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

Assistant Director

Kelly Cogger

Date of authorisation

03.01.2025