

Islŷ of Anglesey County Council	
Report to:	The Executive
Date:	25.03.25
Subject:	Foster Carers Uplift to Core Offer
Portfolio Holder(s):	
Head of Service / Director:	Fôn Roberts
Report Author:	Keith Walters
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Local Members:	All

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s

We are proposing to increase the fostering allowances for 2025-26 in line with Welsh Governments recommended increase to NMA, we have yet to receive the NMA from Welsh Government, but we have modelled a 5% inflationary uplift, and the budget for 2025-26 accounts for this. To be competitive with private sector providers, we are proposing to restructure the skills payments to 3 tiers as opposed to 5 tiers and increase the council tax discount from 50% to 100%. We currently await confirmation of the NMA from Welsh Government

Fostering Allowances trends

Age	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+
2024-25	222.74	202.79	216.86	270.76
% Increase	3%	3%	5%	5%
2023-24	216.24	196.86	206.51	257.87
% Increase	8%	8%	0%	3%
2022-23	200.28	181.97	205.75	249.68
% Increase	2%	2%	2%	2%
2021-22	196.35	178.4	201.72	244.78

Skills Allowances trends

Level	2	3	4	5
2024-25	78.81	131.36	157.63	210.18
% increase	0%	0%	0%	0%
2023-24	78.81	131.36	157.63	210.18
% increase	0%	0%	0%	0%
2022-23	78.81	131.36	157.63	210.18
% increase	2%	2%	2%	2%
2021-22	77.26	128.78	154.54	206.06

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s

Proposed new Skills Allowances

Level 1	140.00
Level 2	180.00
Level 3	220.00

	Old Rate	Annual Cost	New Rate	Annual Cost	Variance
Total Old level 1/ New Level 1	1	-	140.00	7,300.01	7,300.01
Total Old Level 2/ New Level 1	22	78.81	140.00	160,600.13	70,193.73
Total Old Level 3/ New Level 2	18	131.36	180.00	168,943.00	45,652.15
Total Old Level 4/ New Level 2	12	157.63	180.00	112,628.66	13,997.24
Total Old Level 5/ New Level 3	4	210.18	220.00	45,885.75	2,048.17
	<u>57</u>			<u>495,357.55</u>	<u>139,191.30</u>

Additional Cost for skills	139,191.30
Additional Cost for additional council tax reduction	52,472.80
Total Additional Cost	191,664.10
Less Inflation applied to skills	20,382.59
Net additional cost	171,281.51

This additional cost equates to 7 new Independent Fostering Placements transferring in house. As a service, we believe that this is an achievable target.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

We considered only applying inflationary uplifts to the fostering allowances; however, this would be uncompetitive and we would risk losing internal foster carers to the private sector.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

Although we are not seeking any additional funding, we require executive approval as the proposed restructure of the skills payments and the increase in council tax reduction is over and above the statutory minimum allowances expected to be set out by Welsh Government.

Ch – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

Yes – invest to save

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

Yes

Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):

1	How does this decision impact on our long term needs as an Island?	<p>I. The demand for Foster Carers is growing. The Fostering Service is more often having to face searching externally for Fostering Placements. To add to this, the ageing demographic of our current Foster Carers will mean that we will likely have Foster Carers leaving Meathu Cymru Môn in the next few years.</p> <p>II. Maethu Cymru (co-hort of all Wales 22 Local Authority Fostering Services) are trying to harmonise fostering allowances and fees, yet all regions have different priorities in terms of placement searches. For example, North Wales is very different in terms of Cardiff area in terms of the competition it faces from other Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) and third sector agencies. The 'Eliminate Profit' legislation and regulations are due to come into force in Wales in April 2026 for new providers, and in April 2027 for current providers.</p> <p>III. The ever-increasing competition from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's), and the pay packages that they now offer. Also talks of substantial 'golden handshakes' to new Foster Carers.</p> <p>IV. The cost-of-living crisis is very real and people do not feel confident that they can afford to be Foster Carers for the Local Authority.</p>
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2	<p>Is this a decision which it is envisaged will prevent future costs /</p> <p>Yes – recruiting more foster carers results in less reliance on private market.</p>
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Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):

<p>dependencies on the Authority? If so, how?</p>																																								
<p>3</p> <p>Have we been working collaboratively with other organisations to come to this decision? If so, please advise whom.</p>	<p>We have been working with the other 5 North Wales Local authority's. Guidance is issued by the Fostering Network in terms of the allowances and payments annually – a UK wide fostering charity.</p> <p>Comparably all six North Wales Local Authority's pay the Fostering Allowances and additional fees separately.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="432 1032 1386 1489"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="432 1032 592 1151">Fostering Allowances</th> <th data-bbox="592 1032 699 1151">Ynys Môn</th> <th data-bbox="699 1032 834 1151">Gwynedd</th> <th data-bbox="834 1032 940 1151">Conwy</th> <th data-bbox="940 1032 1115 1151">Denbighshire</th> <th data-bbox="1115 1032 1251 1151">Flintshire</th> <th data-bbox="1251 1032 1386 1151">Wrexham</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 1151 592 1234">0-4</td> <td data-bbox="592 1151 699 1234">222.74</td> <td data-bbox="699 1151 834 1234">222</td> <td data-bbox="834 1151 940 1234">212</td> <td data-bbox="940 1151 1115 1234">188</td> <td data-bbox="1115 1151 1251 1234">220</td> <td data-bbox="1251 1151 1386 1234">215</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 1234 592 1317">5-10</td> <td data-bbox="592 1234 699 1317">202.79</td> <td data-bbox="699 1234 834 1317">216</td> <td data-bbox="834 1234 940 1317">193</td> <td data-bbox="940 1234 1115 1317">171</td> <td data-bbox="1115 1234 1251 1317">202</td> <td data-bbox="1251 1234 1386 1317">230</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 1317 592 1400">11-15</td> <td data-bbox="592 1317 699 1400">216.86</td> <td data-bbox="699 1317 834 1400">216</td> <td data-bbox="834 1317 940 1400">216</td> <td data-bbox="940 1317 1115 1400">171</td> <td data-bbox="1115 1317 1251 1400">202</td> <td data-bbox="1251 1317 1386 1400">245</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 1400 592 1482">16+</td> <td data-bbox="592 1400 699 1482">270.76</td> <td data-bbox="699 1400 834 1482">253</td> <td data-bbox="834 1400 940 1482">241</td> <td data-bbox="940 1400 1115 1482">213</td> <td data-bbox="1115 1400 1251 1482">251</td> <td data-bbox="1251 1400 1386 1482">255</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The additional fees are worked out differently in each Local authority i.e. either per child, or per skill level, or both (as in Ynys Môn).</p> <p>Below are the figures and brief explanation regarding what other NW LA's pay their Foster Carers:-</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="432 1727 1386 1955"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="432 1727 1386 1765">Additional Fees / Skills Payments:-</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 1765 624 1955">Conwy</td> <td data-bbox="624 1765 1386 1955"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Child – £250.08 per week 2 Children – £375.12 per week 3 Children – £625.20 per week <p>***Conwy are very soon moving to a flat rate of £250 per child.</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Fostering Allowances	Ynys Môn	Gwynedd	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Wrexham	0-4	222.74	222	212	188	220	215	5-10	202.79	216	193	171	202	230	11-15	216.86	216	216	171	202	245	16+	270.76	253	241	213	251	255	Additional Fees / Skills Payments:-		Conwy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Child – £250.08 per week 2 Children – £375.12 per week 3 Children – £625.20 per week <p>***Conwy are very soon moving to a flat rate of £250 per child.</p>
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		Denbighshire	Tier system – based on skills and experience, and No of children placement –			
				Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
			1 Child	£90.35	£150.59	£210.82
			2 Children	£120.46	£210.82	£301.17
			3 Children	£150.59	£271.05	£391.52
		4 Children	£180.70	£331.28	£481.87	
		Wrecsam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QCF Skills payment 1 child - £128 • QCF Skills payment 2 children - £192 • QCF Skills payment 3+ children - £256 			
		Gwynedd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately upon approval - £107 • After foster for 1 year with 1 child in placement - £161 • 2 children - £214 			

Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 children - £321 • Exceptions with 4 in placement - £429 	
Flintshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 - £0 • Level 2 - £65 • Level 4 - £230 	skills, paid •	Level 3 - £125 per child. Based on
Ynys Môn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 - £0 • Level 2 - £78.81 • Level 4 - £157.63 • Level 5 - £210.18 	skills, paid •	Level 3 - £131.36 per child. Based on

Copied directly from Fostering Network website:-

	0-4 years	5-10 years	11-15 years	16-17 years
Wales	£212	£193	£193	£241

- 4 **Have** All mainstream Local Authority Foster Carers reside on the island. They have **Anglesey** been involved in both formal and informal consultations regarding the Fostering **citizens** allowances and fees. It is a regular agenda item at the Fostering Forum.

played a part in drafting this way forward, including those directly affected by the decision? Please explain how.

5	<p>Children and young people are often having to be matched with foster carers who potential may not always meet every need that they have – this is not an intentional impact disregard to their intentional needs, but to do with the fact that there is a real that this shortage of Foster Carers that offer different things that could meet a child/young decision persons needs. An example of this on the island is that there is a shortage of Welsh would speaking Foster Carers that can be matched with our Welsh speaking children/young people. It is seen that recruiting more Welsh speaking Foster have on Carers would re-dress this issue.</p> <p>It is also fair to say that in terms of having to match with what is available to the groups children and young people matching can be compromised in terms of finding a protected better match for children/young persons in terms of Age, Disability, gender reunder the assignment, pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex (gender) and Equality sexual orientation (protected characteristics of the Act). Act 2010.</p>

6 If this is a **strategic** As noted above – the cost of living crisis is very real and people (especially Foster Carers) do not feel confident that they can afford to be Foster Carers for the Local

Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):

<p>decision, note any potential impact that the decision would have on those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage.</p>	<p>Authority. This coupled with the fact that Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) are offering handsome financial packages equate to not only difficulties in recruiting Local Authority Foster Carers but also retaining them.</p>
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7	<p>Note any potential impact that this decision would have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.</p>	<p>As touched upon above, it is clear in the day to day matching of children and young people that we often have to compromise in terms of placing children /young people in placements where Welsh is not spoken. This is purely because of the lack of Welsh speaking Foster Carers being recruited (and retained).</p> <p>A greater incentive financially would encourage more Welsh speakers to apply to Foster (amongst all fostering enquiries), and possibly even encourage those who foster for the Independent Fostering Agency's (IFA's) to transfer.</p> <p>With the Welsh Government agenda of 'Eliminating Profit' underway the Fostering Market is in a position whereby it is possible that many IFA's will be forced to close down by April 2027. With this in mind Foster Carers themselves will be in a position to either register with a charity (who we as a Local Authority have to pay a similar fee to that of the IFA's) or register with a Local Authority. This is a timely opportunity that could be capitalised upon.</p>
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E – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	SLT - supported
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	Yes – forms part of SLT
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	As above
4	Human Resources (HR)	As above
5	Property	N/R
E – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	N/R
7	Procurement	N/R
8	Scrutiny	TBC
9	Local Members	To be heard in full Council Meeting
F - Appendices:		
<p>**Attached is the more detailed report that illustrates the application in a clearer more coherent way (Appendix A). Not all information can be shared in the desired manner on this form.</p>		

Ff - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):

**As above.