

**NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL  
DECISION**

**DECISION OF: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
AND LIFELONG LEARNING  
WITH ADVICE FROM: DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES  
DIRECTORATE: PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**



**DECISION NO: PC103 (2019/20 SCHEME)**

**SUBJECT: FOSTER CARER ALLOWANCES 2020/21**

**KEY DECISION: NO**

**REASON:**

Does not result in additional expenditure in excess of £500,000 and not significant in impacts on communities across two or more wards

**BACKGROUND:**

Foster carers receive a weekly allowance to cover the cost of caring for a child. These allowances are reviewed each year, to encourage more people to become foster carers and to ensure that they reflect national guidance.

From April 2020, allowances will be increased to reflect the increase in the national guidance and additional allowances for birthdays, holidays and festivals will be introduced.

**DECISION:**

To approve the age-related in-house foster care allowances as follows, to apply from 1 April 2020, noting that the basic weekly age-related allowance includes an element of savings for the child, and new savings policy will be developed to give advice and guidance to carers in relation to savings.

**1. Weekly age-related allowance (government guidance figures in italics)**

<b>North Somerset Age Banding</b>	<b>Weekly Age-Related Allowance (2019/20 rates in brackets)</b>	<b>Government Age Banding for areas other than London and the South East</b>	<b>Weekly Age-Related Allowance</b>
0-4	£135 (£132)	0-2	£132 (£129)
		3-4	£135 (£132)
5-10	£149 (£146)	5-10	£149 (£146)
11-12	£170 (£167)	11-15	£170 (£167)
13-17	£198 (£194)	16-17	£198 (£194)

## 2. Additional allowances for birthdays, holidays and festivals

Item	Annual Amount	e.g. for age 5-10	Payment Date
Birthday Allowance	One week's worth of the age-related allowance	£149	14 days in advance of the child's birthday
Holiday Allowance	Two weeks' worth of the age-related allowance	£298	1 June
Christmas / Festival Allowance	One week's worth of the age-related allowance	£149	24 November for Christmas (other options available on request for other religious festivals)

### **REASONS:**

The increases in fees are intended to ensure that the allowances cover the costs of caring for a child and that the recruitment and retention of foster carers can be improved. The new total allowances represent an increase of around 10% when compared with the current allowances.

### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED:**

A number of options were considered, particularly in relation to the mechanism for paying the additional allowances. After consultation with foster carers, it was decided that the additional allowances be paid as a separate payment rather than a proportion being included in the weekly allowance. The new allowances are expected to strike an appropriate balance between providing incentives for foster carers and affordability for the Council.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

#### **Costs**

The inflationary increase is expected to add around £20,000 to the annual costs and the introduction of the additional allowance is expected to cost an additional £70,000 per annum.

#### **Funding**

The additional costs described above will be met from the foster care allowances budget and the increases were taken into account in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and 2020/21 budget setting process. It is anticipated that the significant increase in allowances will lead to an increase in the number of foster carers and this is also accounted for in the MTFP. It is worth noting that, on average, an in-house foster placement costs around £20,000 per annum less than a placement made through an independent foster agency.

### **LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Fostering Service National Standards, 2011, The Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011, Care Standards Act 2000, Children Act 1989: Guidance and Regulations Volume 4, Fostering Service, Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011.

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

If the increase in allowances leads to placing more children in local foster placements, this should reduce travel costs.

**CONSULTATION**

The introduction of the additional allowances came as a direct result of consultation with foster carers.

**RISK MANAGEMENT**

No significant risks identified, although it is not guaranteed that increases in allowances will necessarily lead to an increase in the recruitment and retention of foster carers. If these proposals were not approved, there would be an increased risk that the Council would struggle to recruit and retain carers under the current foster carer remuneration arrangements.

**EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes / No  
Positive impacts identified both for foster carers and children.

**CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

No additional implications.

**APPENDICES**

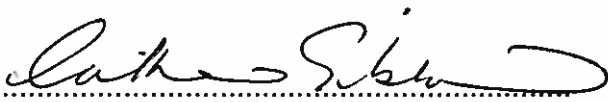
None.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>

**SIGNATORIES:**

DECISION MAKER(S):

Signed: 

Title: Executive Member for Children’s Services and Lifelong Learning

Date: 13.3.20

WITH ADVICE FROM:

Signed: 

Title: Director of People and Communities

Date: 12.3.20

**Footnote: Details of changes made and agreed by the decision taker since publication of the proposed (pre-signed) decision notice, if applicable:**