

**REPORT:** Executive Board Sub Committee

**DATE:** 20 March 2008

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Children and Young People

**SUBJECT:** Review of Fees and Charges – Foster Carers

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 In accordance with the annual budget review, to seek the Boards approval of the proposed increases in fees and charges for the rates paid to foster carers.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That fees and charges increases for Foster Carers outlined in Appendix 1 and 2 be approved.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Prior to 2007/2008 the rates of allowances paid to Foster Carers were increased in line with the inflationary rates applied to the council's budget rather than in line with the increases recommended by the Fostering Network. This had a negative impact on the authority's ability to recruit and retain foster carers and increased the dependency on independent fostering agency and out of borough residential placements.

3.2 It was agreed that for 2007/2008, the rates of allowances for Foster Carers could be increased in line with recommended by the Fostering Network.

3.3 For those circumstances where the Fostering Network does not make a recommendation, it is proposed that rates are increased by 2.5% (Appendix 2).

3.4 The basic allowances for Foster Carers includes a weekly allowance, plus birthday, holiday and Christmas allowances. Fees will need to be increased with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.

3.5 From April 2007, Fostering Services must publicise their allowances clearly separated from fees.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications as a result of this report.

#### **5.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Provision exists to meet this expenditure within the Council's approved budget for Children in Care placements.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children and Young People**

Increasing the Foster Carers allowance in line with the rates proposed by the Fostering Network will improve the authority's ability to recruit and retain Foster Carers and reduce the dependency on independent fostering agencies and out of borough residential placements.

##### **6.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton**

N/A

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

N/A

##### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Sufficient provision is required for the increased numbers of children who need to be cared for by the local authority.

##### **6.5 Halton's Urban**

N/A

#### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The proposals will ensure that the risk of not being able to recruit or retain Foster Carers in Halton is better managed. There are ongoing risks in relation to increased numbers of children requiring to be cared for by the local authority, but robust gate-keeping and monitoring measures are in place.

#### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

**8.1** The provision for Children in Care within Foster Care is based on, wherever possible, a clear match between the needs of children and the skills of their prospective carers. Additionally by potentially improving both the recruitment and retention of carers the equality of opportunity for children in care in Halton will be improved.

**11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

11.1 Fees and charges for Foster Carers will need to be increased from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.

**12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Documents  
The Fostering Network  
Minimum Allowances

Place of Inspection  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Chester  
Building – Grosvenor  
House, Runcorn

Contact  
Ann McIntyre – Operational  
Director – Business Planning  
and Resources