

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 13 June 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Children's

PORTFOLIO: Children and Young People Portfolio

SUBJECT: Fostering and SGO Carers Uplift from 22/23 & 23/24 (outstanding backpay)

WARD(S) All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 An urgent decision is required to progress the delay in foster carer and SGO uplifts. The end of year accounts will need to reflect the decision. All uplifts have been agreed by previous AD.
- 1.2 The report proposes previous uplift (outstanding payments dating back to 2022) is made to our Foster Carers and SGO Carers.
- 1.3 The increase to these allowances will enhance the current offer and we envisage improve Halton's recruitment and retention of Foster Carers.
- 1.4 The request is for all SGO Carers to be paid their uplift from 1st April to 31st March 2023 at rate of 1%.
- 1.5 The further request is for all Foster Carers and SGO Carers to be provided with an uplift at a rate of 2% to be backdated to 1st April 2023 until 31st March 2024.
- 1.6 The **estimated** accruals that finance have entered into a gresso for the uplift (outstanding backpay) is:

SGO 22/23	£22,086
SGO 23/24	£49,036
Fostering 23/24	£40,890
TOTAL COST	£112,012

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1. the report be noted; and

2. the Board approves the Strategy.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED:

To take no action, may result in a high proportion of Halton's Foster Carers choosing to resign and become Foster Carers with private agencies who pay higher allowances than Local Authorities, this would result in increased expenditure for the Local Authority and restricted choice of suitable placements for our most vulnerable children and young people.

3.2 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS USED OR REFERRED TO:

Useful Date:

There are currently:

- 65 approved mainstream Foster Carers.
- 26 approved Friends and Family Carers.
- 10 temporary approved Friends and Family.
- 146 Special Guardianship Carers .

Summary:

It was agreed SGO Carers & Foster carers in Halton receive a 1% uplift in their allowances for the year 2022- 2023, Foster Carers received this uplift but SGO carers did not receive there uplift, it is believed this oversight occurred due to frequent changes of senior personnel.

Subsequently further uplift for 2023/2024 was agreed at rate of 2% for the 1st April 2023 until 31st March 2024 however this has also not been implemented due to frequent changes of senior personnel.

Unfortunately due to frequent changes in senior personnel it has been challenging to locate relevant background documents.

Consultations and discussions have been taking place with previous senior management team between January 2023 and October 2023. The foster carers were also consulted by the previous Divisional Manager who advised them of the uplift.

Head of Service & Director of Children Services attended Foster Carer 'Have Your Say' event which took place on 29th April 2024, remuneration was significant feature of the agenda.

It is recommended uplifted allowances previously agreed and shared with Foster Carers and SGO Carers and all associated

outstanding backpay is paid prior to newly appointed Senior Leadership team commence with review of allowances for 2024/2025.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Not applicable

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The monies confirmed through the uplift have been ringfenced from last years budget and are available.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Children should be provided with good quality care in Halton when they can no longer live within their family. The uplift had previously been agreed but was not paid and will need to progress to ensure carers remain committed to providing Halton children with care.

SGO carers are also entitled to financial support from the council and whilst the uplift was agreed it was not paid. Carers should be provided with financial support to ensure the child's needs can be met. Failure to provide adequate funding will result in placement instability.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

6.3 A Healthy Halton

6.4 A Safer Halton

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Failure to pay carers will result in instability in the service. There is a national shortage of carers and further delays may result in resignation of carers which will result in children moving placements into higher cost placements due to sufficiency issues

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 N/A

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None identified.

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

None.