

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Social Care & Wellbeing Committee DATE: 22nd April 2010

CORPORATE DIRECTOR: Fred McBride

TITLE OF REPORT: Fees and Allowances Paid to Foster Carers, Adopters and associated services.

REPORT NUMBER: SCW/10/048

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This paper sets out the various fees and allowances paid to foster carers, kinship carers, adopters and carers who provide supported lodgings. It also sets out the fees paid to Curator-ad-litem's, Reporting Officers and Panel Chair's. The report details the proposed increases/changes to these allowances.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 1) Approve with effect from 1 April 2010 there be no change to the level of the Fostering Allowance (6.1), Payment for Skills fees (6.2), Adoption Allowance (6.3), Kinship Carer Allowance (6.5) and Supported Lodgings Allowance (6.7).
- 2) Approve with effect from 1 April 2010 an increase of 1.5% to the fees for Chair of the Adoption/Permanency and Fostering Panels (6.4) and the Reporting Officer/Curator-ad-litem fees (6.6).

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The delivery of the recommendations will be met from within existing resources

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The proposed recommendations take full account of Aberdeen City Council's Community Plan, the Single Outcome Agreement and Vibrant Dynamic and Forward Looking.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

6. REPORT

6.1 Fostering Allowances

- 6.1.1 In line with the decision taken during 2005/06, Aberdeen City Council pays the rates recommended by “The Fostering Network” (tFN) and it is therefore proposed that Committee adopt the revised rates now notified with effect from 1 April 2010.
- 6.1.2 These rates for the coming year remain unchanged from those paid in 2009/10. In so doing, Committee are asked to note the impact of the revised rates and the resulting costs detailed in Table 1 below.
- 6.1.3 The rates are payable over 56 weeks to enable the equivalent of 4 weeks allowances to be paid as holidays, Christmas/Religious festival and birthday allowances.

Table 1

Age Group	No. of Children	2009/10 Weekly Rate	2010/11 Weekly Rate
0 – 4	50*	125.09	125.09
5 – 10	52*	142.49	142.49
11 – 15	25*	177.38	177.38
16 – 18	10	215.74	215.74
Total	137		

* These figures include children who receive regular respite.

- 6.1.4 Based on these figures the projected spend for 2010/11 is £1,050,000.
(*The costs associated with placing a child with Independent Fostering Agencies range from £40,000 - £80,000 per placement per year.*)

6.2 Payment for Skills

- 6.2.1 The Payment for Skills scheme has been operational since 2003/04 although was initially approved by Community Services Committee in September 2001. This scheme pays a fee to foster carers in recognition of the service they provide.
- 6.2.2 It is proposed, in line with the 0% increase to the allowances as determined by tFN, that there be no change to the existing level of fee paid to foster carers. Foster Carers have been notified of this proposal which reflects the practice of other Fostering Agencies, the stance taken by tFN but also the difficult financial circumstances which Aberdeen City Council and all other authorities are operating in. The costs are detailed in Table 2 below.
- 6.2.3 A target of recruiting 25 new foster carers for the 2010/11 year has been set. This will increase the capacity of the service and enable children to be placed within local resources. It will also enable us to reduce the numbers of children placed with Independent Foster Agencies which have a significantly higher cost. (For the year 2009/10 there has been a 12% reduction in the number of children placed with Independent Fostering

Agencies.) The costs of these new foster carers will be off-set by reductions in our spend to these external agencies.

Table 2

Level	No. of Carers	2009/10 Annual Fee	2010/11 Annual Fee
1	46*	7,798	7,798
2	64*	11,696	11,696
3	8	15,596	15,596
4	6	19,276	19,276
Total	124		

* This figure includes respite carers who only receive a pro-rata fee for the duration of each placement

6.2.4 Based on these figures the projected spend for 2010/11 is £1,020,000

6.2.5 From time to time there may be exceptional circumstances where a higher fee is paid in order to facilitate the return of a child from a high cost out-of-authority placement.

6.3 Adoption Allowances

6.3.1 It is recommended that adoption allowances remain unchanged in accordance to the foster allowances as noted above. Adoption Allowances are also paid on a 56 week basis to allow for holidays, birthdays and Christmas/religious festival celebration. The scheme was changed in 2003 and there continues to be allowances paid under the old scheme. Adoption allowances are paid having considered the needs of the child and the financial circumstances of the adopters.

6.3.2 Enhancements are paid for six children reflecting the additional needs of the children or the circumstances by which adoption could be achieved. In the later case this was seen as a “spend to save” removing children from a high cost out-of-authority care placement.

6.3.3 Children placed with prospective adopters receive an allowance equivalent to the adoption allowance pending the conclusion of legal proceedings. This reflects the task they have assumed and allows for consistency in allowances paid in respect of the child post adoption. There is no Payment for Skills fee in respect of adoptive or prospective adoptive parents. The resultant costs are detailed in Table 3 below.

6.3.4 On 26 September 2009 the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 came into effect. This piece of legislation made some minor changes to the circumstances in which an adoption allowance could be paid. Adoption Allowances are means tested and whereas previously there were two qualifying criteria, (the needs of the child and the income of the adopters) an Adoption Allowance can now be paid solely on the basis of the income

of the adopters. Based upon figures over the past two years this change would have had relevance in very few cases and it is not anticipated that it will have a significant impact on the budget. Appendix 1 is the revised Adoption Allowance Scheme for Committee Members information.

Table 3

Age Group	No. of Children	2009/10 Weekly Rate	2010/11 Weekly Rate
0 – 4 *	6	72.48	72.48
5 – 10 *	32	89.95	89.95
11 – 15 *	18	111.97	111.97
16 – 18	7	144.98	144.98
Total	63		

6.3.5 Based on these figures the projected spend for 2010/11 is £350,000

6.3.6 Adopters can claim a Legal Expenses Allowance up to £300.00 to contribute towards the legal costs involved in adopting a child. Adoption is a private legal action and is not something the Local Authority can be party to. This payment replicates practice in neighbouring authorities. The anticipated costs associated with this allowance will be met from within the existing budget available to the Adoption Service.

6.4 Independent Chair of the Adoption/Permanency and Fostering Panels Fee

6.4.1 As is common to most Local Authorities the chair of Aberdeen City Council's Adoption & Permanency Panel and the Fostering Panel are independent of the Local Authority. These appointments promotes the independent and scrutinising role of the Panel.

Due to the need to retain an Independent Chair of both Panels an allowance is paid to the Chair. These Panels fulfil a statutory responsibility and meet on an alternate weekly basis. The time involved in attending and preparing for each panel is approximately 10 hours.

It is proposed to increase the allowance of £76.25 per Panel by 1.5% to £77.40. This represents an annual cost of £3,715.20 (based on 48 panels per year). Neighbouring authorities employ an independent chair at a rate far in excess of the proposed fee.

The anticipated cost associated with this allowance will be met from within the existing budget available to the Adoption and Fostering service.

6.5 Kinship Carer Allowance

6.5.1 The rates payable to Kinship Carers (carers who are related to the child or who have a pre-existing relationship) and who the social work service has

been actively involved in placing the child, will remain unchanged for the coming financial year.

6.5.2 The Scottish Government as part of the Concordant recommended that Local Authorities move towards paying Kinship carers the same level of allowance as Foster Carers. Policy and Strategy Committee in March 2009 supported the development of a Kinship Strategy. A report detailing the strategy will be presented to the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee in the very near future. This will provide details of how it is proposed to take forward our commitment to deliver on paying an equivalent allowance to Kinship Carers as that paid to foster carers. It will also set out how as an authority we will assess, approve, support and remunerate Kinship Carers. Kinship Carers do not receive the fee in respect of Payment for Skills.

The resultant costs are detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Age Group	No. of Children	2009/10 Weekly Rate	2010/11 Weekly Rate
0 – 4 *	13	48.32	48.32
5 – 10 *	36	59.97	59.97
11 – 15 *	23	74.65	74.65
16 – 18	3	96.65	96.65
Total	75		

6.5.3 Based on these figures the projected spend for 2010/11 is £270,000

6.6 Curator ad-litem/Reporting Officers Fees

6.6.1 In 2007 Resources Management Committee agreed the levels of fee paid to Curator-ad-litem/Reporting Officers. The fee set was in recognition of the difficulties in recruiting officers to produce such reports. Work was undertaken with Aberdeenshire Council to ensure a consistency of fee across both authorities. This remains ongoing given that both authorities tend to access the same Curator's and Reporting Officers.

6.6.2 It is proposed to increase the current fee by 1.5%, an increase which would be met from within existing budgets. The increases are detailed in table 5 below.

Table 5

	Fees 2009/10	Fees 2010/11
Curator ad Litem Reports		
Appointment by Court	230.81	234.28
Second and Subsequent Children	115.41	117.14
Joint Curator ad Litem and Reporting Officer Reports		
Appointment by Court	346.20	351.40
Second and Subsequent Children	173.11	175.70

6.6.3 The payment of a typing fee of £20 and mileage allowance at the standard rate of 49.3 per mile will remain unchanged.

6.7 Supported Lodgings Scheme

6.7.1 The Council runs a Supported Lodgings scheme that is accessible to vulnerable young adults (from aged 16 to 25) who have previously been looked after and who would benefit from living with a family or single person. The person providing the lodgings (the carer) is paid a weekly allowance.

6.7.2 The Service Manager has assessed the operation of the current scheme and recommends that the fee of £205.00 per week remains unchanged in order to attract and retain carers. A substantial element of the existing cost is met from Supporting People Grant.

The Service user is expected to make a contribution towards part of this cost.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None