

## CABINET

22<sup>nd</sup> MAY 2018

### FOSTERING RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT POLICY

#### Report of the Director for People

Strategic Aim:	REACHING OUR FULL POTENTIAL	
Key Decision: Yes	Forward Plan Reference: FP/220218	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr R Foster, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People (Safeguarding)	
Contact Officer(s):	Rebecca Wilshire, Head of Children's Social Care	01572 758258 rwilshire@rutland.gov.uk

#### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Approves Fostering Retention and Recruitment Policy for the provision of retaining and future recruitment of carers to care for our children looked after.
2. Approves the change in payment structure to foster carers for second and subsequent children as set out in the Fostering Retention and Recruitment Policy.

## **1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report sets out Fostering Recruitment and Retention Policy and seeks approval from Cabinet for the policy.

## **2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 2.1 Each Local Authority has a duty to ensure there are enough carers of sufficient quality to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children, young people and parents and as such, recruitment and retention of carers is an important function of our Fostering, Adoption and Care Leaver Service. The Local Authority requires a clear recruitment strategy to ensure new carers are sourced each year to sufficiently meet the needs of the local area. In addition, Rutland needs experienced foster carers who are already approved to provide the experience and support to vulnerable children and to their peers who are just starting out.
- 2.2 The Recruitment and Retention Policy sets out how the Council will meet this duty and is aimed at both Foster Carers - including Connected Carers - and a wider audience.
- 2.3 Currently there is a shortage of Local Authority foster placements across the country and consequently there is competition to recruit new carers, not just with other Local Authorities but also with Independent Fostering Agencies. This is particularly significant for Rutland both because of our size, and because of our multiple and larger neighbours. It is important therefore that there is a clear strategy for recruitment and retention, ensuring that the Council offers allowances and fees which are at least equitable with neighbouring authorities, and development and progression that supports and encourages carers to remain working with the Council, caring for our children and young people.
- 2.4 The Policy will allow the Council to ensure that Rutland's current carers feel supported and have their needs as carers met, as well as enabling them to meet the needs of the children and young people placed with them.
- 2.5 This Policy also introduces a change to the payment structure (fees) which see an increased payment for second and subsequent children placed with Foster Carers and Connected Carers.

## **3 CHANGES TO THE PREVIOUS POLICY**

- 3.1 The Policy outlines the Council's commitment to recruitment and to retaining connected carers and foster carers. It outlines the practical support which carers will get.
- 3.2 The structure within which carers can progress has been changed; previously there were three levels and the Policy is now looking to introduce four levels to better reflect the skills and experience of our carers, outline new expectations to ensure children and service needs are met.

### **3.3 Changes in Fees**

- 3.3.1 It is proposed that there is an increase in the fee paid to foster carers and

connected foster carers for the second or subsequent child; this will enable Rutland to have a larger pool of carers for sibling groups and prevent the need to use Independent Fostering Agencies.

3.3.2 It is not intended to increase the fostering allowance this year; the current allowance remains in line with the national standards for 2018-19. The proposal is for an increase in the second or subsequent child only. Rutland's fostering allowance is still over the minimum allowance recommended for 2018-2019.

3.3.3 The Policy also outlines the fee for other local authorities when they need to use Rutland's placements, this will ensure we retain our carers when they have no children in placement and prevent them moving to alternative fostering services.

#### **4 IMPACT ON FUTURE PROVISION**

4.1 The proposed changes to the Policy will enable Rutland to:

- a) Attract more in-house carers who are willing and able to take more than one child and take siblings groups, which will mean a reduction in the use of high cost Independent Fostering Agencies.
- b) Recruit more carers in the area to enable children, when they become looked after, to remain local to their school, friends and family.
- c) Place focus on carers undertaking further work for the Council, having the flexibility to use carers' skills, experience and knowledge to work with families in keeping children at home.
- d) Retain our carers, using their capacity in different ways when there is no child in placement or allowing other local authorities to place children for short period with our carers to ensure carers continue to get an income and continue to develop.

4.2 It is intended to implement the Policy as soon as possible following approval be Cabinet.

#### **5 CONSULTATION**

5.1 Current Rutland Foster Carers and Social Workers responsible for Children Looked After in the county were engaged with during the development of the Policy and the changes proposed.

5.2 The proposal regarding an increase in the fee paid to foster carers for the second or subsequent child was tabled at Children's Scrutiny Panel in February 2018 and was supported by the Panel.

5.3 Consultation on the Policy and the proposed changes has also taken place with the Portfolio Holder.

#### **6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

6.1 The Policy enables the Council to meet its duty to have sufficient, and sufficient quality, carers. There is therefore no viable alternative to having a policy in place.

- 6.2 The current pay structure could stay as it is, but this restricts the in-house provision for sibling groups, and consequently requires more children are placed with Independent Fostering Agencies.

## **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct cost implications of the policy itself.
- 7.2 The financial implications of the changes to fees for second or subsequent children will be met within the existing placement budget: whilst there is likely to be an increase, this is off-set by likely increase in using in-house carers rather than an Independent Fostering Agency, whose fees are higher.
- 7.3 The changes will mean an increase to current Connected Carers who have more than one child currently to bring them in line with the current policy
- 7.4 The overall cost to implement this Policy on existing placement would be £9,000 and this can contained within the existing budget.

## **8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 The provision of fostering services is key to ensuring children who become looked after are offered safe and stable placements, and in ensuring the safeguarding of vulnerable children and young people in Rutland. This will have a positive impact on those carers who have responsibility for a vulnerable child or young person, as well as the child/young person themselves.

## **9 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Council is required by Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 to take into account community safety implications. The Policy will contribute to the safety and reduction of risk to vulnerable children and young people through effective carer support.

## **10 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The service will improve children and young people's health and wellbeing by providing sufficient provision to meet needs and ensuring suitably trained and experienced carers.

## **11 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 The Fostering Recruitment and Retention Policy is intended to ensure Rutland's carers feel valued. They undertake a very important role for the Council and should be rewarded for appropriately for doing so.
- 11.2 This Policy will enable more in-house carers to take siblings groups and improve the Council's in-house provision for this.
- 11.3 It make better use of the skills, support, expertise and knowledge of carers to

support other carers, work directly with families and offer a service which really holds families at the centre of all we do.

- 11.4 Whilst there will be initial cost to bring current carers in line with the new policy, this will met within the current placement budget.

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1 Report 45/2018: Increase Fostering Fee for Second or Subsequent Child tabled at Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel, February 2018.

## **13 APPENDICES**

- 13.1 Appendix A – Rutland Fostering Recruitment and Retention Policy.

**A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.**