

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER

EMPLOYMENT BASED FOSTER CARER SCHEME

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To obtain permission to set up an employment based foster carer scheme

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 A review of our sufficiency strategy has identified that there is a need to target the recruitment of foster placements for older children and young people.
- 2.2 The current Council investment as resulted in 30 new foster care placements. This has resulted in the fostering service being successful in recruiting foster carers for younger children or children who do not have complex care need. We have not therefore seen a reduction in external provision for older more difficult to place children.
- 2.3. In order to reduce external provision we have introduced a fee based foster carer scheme where additional fees above the standard fostering allowance are paid to foster carers caring for children with additional needs, this appeals to a certain cross section of society, we are also proposing to offer an employment based scheme where individuals and couples can make an active choice to secure employment by offering their home, experience and skills in caring for children to make a real difference to these children.
- 2.4 The scheme builds upon mainstream fostering, however requires individuals and couples to commit toward an employment based contract to care for these children and young people. The scheme is intended to enable the child or young person to establish stability and settle within a family environment, to engage in pro-social behaviour and encourage them to maximise their life chances.
- 2.5 The scheme will initially recruit 4 paid foster carer households, where one individual within the household will enter into a contract of employment and will be recruited and approved via fostering national standards, regulations and recruitment process. Each paid foster carer would receive a salary of £ 21,000 plus fostering allowance relevant to the age of the child/young person.

2.6 The Employment Based Foster Carer Scheme recruitment strategy will be run alongside the mainstream fostering service but will be targeted specifically for paid foster carers.

Paid foster carers are expected to:

- One person commits to be employed by the Council as their employee.
- Offer each young person his or her own bedroom.
- Commit to the care of a young person with challenging behaviour and be able to maintain the placement in difficult circumstances.
- Provide a safe and consistent environment by setting and enforcing boundaries.
- Work as part of a multi-disciplinary team including active participation in fortnightly progress meetings.
- Be willing to work with very challenging young people, accepting suggested placements except where there is an unacceptable level of risk.
- Contribute to the provision of short break (or other support) for other foster carers, especially during periods where they do not have a young person in placement.

Paid foster carers will be recruited, assessed and approved in the same way as mainstream foster carers, except for the differences outlined below.

- Paid foster carers would be expected to demonstrate the same competencies as mainstream carers plus be able to demonstrate a history of caring for or working with children / young people with challenging behaviour.
- Paid foster carers must have relevant experience and undertaken relevant training or be willing and able to achieve this within one year of being approved.
- The position may be of interest to experienced teenage Foster Carers, Teachers, Social Workers, Residential Workers or Youth Workers.
- Paid foster carers should not usually have any children under 13 years of age living in the family home.
- If a single carer they will need to be available all day, or if a couple, one person to be available all day.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 To approve an employment based foster carer scheme for our children to offer an alternative to external agency placements.

3.2 Not to approve an employment based scheme

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 An employment based scheme will enable the fostering service to expand its range of foster carers and provide employment opportunities within value for money. The comparative cost of a single external agency foster placement is £76,856 per year.

4.2 The scheme will offer family based care in the local community ensuring that children and young people requiring alternative care can integrate in their community and are able to sustain relationships with family and friends as well as increase the realisation of reunification to family if or when this is appropriate.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 The foster carers will become employees of North Lincolnshire contracted to provide foster care which is reliant upon them being formally approved foster carers. The cost of these will be met from the external placement budget as an alternative to placements which cost more.

5.2 The single paid foster carer within the household would be paid a fixed rate commensurate to the starting point of Grade 6 on the local authority salary scale. The appropriate foster care allowance per child would also be paid; hence the estimated maximum cost per placement would be £40,000. Where a paid foster carer looked after more than one child, this will reduce the unit cost of placement. Paid Foster Carers would be subject to expectations as detailed in section 3 and be required to be registered as suitable foster carers and look after the children specified, failure to do so without reasonable cause would render their employment null and void..

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

6.1 These foster carers would have to meet the diverse needs of all children placed. Their contribution to looking after these children would offer a safe place for the children and offer wider community safety where they promote pro social behaviour.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 Mainstream foster carers have been consulted and they support the introduction of additional schemes.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That the proposals for the introduction of an employment based foster care scheme are approved.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None