

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
27th April 2006

PAYMENTS TO FOSTER CARERS
FOR 2006/2007

**JAN BRUNTON - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

**PAUL THOMPSON – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEARNING &
SKILLS**

**TERRY REDMAYNE - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Board of the allowances which will be payable to foster carers as from 8th April 2006.

BACKGROUND

2. Middlesbrough Fostering Service has operated a Banded Payments Scheme for its foster carers since January 2000. When foster carers are first approved, they normally start on Band A and receive a weekly allowance which is linked to the age of the child. As they build up skills and competencies through practical experience and attending training, they can progress to Band B and from there to Band C.

3. Each payment band has a set of competencies associated with it and the recommendation for progression from one band to the next is made at the foster carer's annual review and then presented to the Family Placement Panel.
4. An exemption allowance is paid when more than 3 children are placed with a foster carer. There is also a disability allowance paid where a child with disabilities is placed but Disability Living Allowance benefit has not yet been awarded and an out of hours allowance paid to carers who are willing to take emergency placements out of normal office hours.
5. Since the Banded Payments scheme was implemented in January 2000, the rates of payment have been reviewed annually at the end of each financial year. In most years, the Band A allowance has been increased to keep pace with inflation. An exception was made in 2003 when the availability of grant funding meant that we were able to increase the Band A allowance by 10%.
6. As no additional funding is available this year and there are continued budgetary pressures within the Council, the increase in allowances for 2006/7 is 2% which is in line with inflation and consistent with the Council's overall financial strategy. The increase applies to the Band A allowance only; other payments have not been increased. Details of the rates which will be paid are given in Appendix 1.
7. The allowances paid by Middlesbrough compare unfavourably to those paid by other agencies in the region, both local authorities and independent sector agencies and this fact is impacting on the recruitment of foster carers. Work will continue within the Children, Families & Learning Department during 2006/7 to try to address this issue as part of a general review of services to children looked after.
8. An additional factor which will affect the issue of allowances to foster carers is the proposed introduction of a National Minimum Fostering Allowance in July 2006. The draft proposals are currently in the consultation phase and Middlesbrough foster carers met on April 7th to discuss them. The implications of a minimum allowance will not be clear until the final version of the proposals is published but if the draft proposals are the ones that are implemented, then it seems that Middlesbrough's allowances will already meet the minimum standard.

OPTION APPRAISAL

9. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

10. The allowances for 2006-2007 contained in this report are in line with the Council's overall financial strategy and will be met from within the budget allocations of the Children, Families and Learning Department.
11. There are no legal implications in this report and no specific ward implications as the Fostering Service covers the whole of Middlesbrough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the contents of this report.

REASONS

13. It is important that elected members are aware of the financial aspects of the Fostering Service's work in order that they can effectively fulfil their responsibilities as Corporate Parents to children looked after.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

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Payments to Foster Carers 2006/2007

Band A fostering allowance		
Age of child	Rate per week	Rate per day
0 – 4 years	£91.76	£13.11
5 – 10 years	£114.00	£16.29
11 – 15 years	£141.78	£20.25
Over 16 years	£183.53	£26.22
Day fostering	Under 4 hours	Over 4 hours
0 – 4 years	£6.55	£13.11
5 – 10 years	£8.14	£16.29
11 – 15 years	£10.13	£20.25
Over 16 years	£13.11	£26.22
Band B payment		
<p>These consist of the Band A allowance plus an enhanced allowance of £50 per week. The enhanced allowance is payable to the foster carer(s), not for each child. There is a weekly retainer allowance of £25 per week available when there are no children placed.</p>		
Band C payment		
<p>These consist of the Band B payment plus a weekly fee of £100. This fee is payable to the foster carer(s), not for each child. There is a weekly retainer allowance of £75 per week available when there are no children placed.</p>		
Other allowances		
Exemption allowance – Band A	£10	
Exemption allowance – Band B	£12.50	
Exemption allowance – Band C	£37.50	
Out of hours allowance (per week)	£45	
Disability allowance (weekly/pro-rata)	£20	