

**APPENDIX A***Summary of Feedback from the Fostering Fees Consultation***Overview**

The Fostering Fees consultation ran from Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January to Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018. In total 68 people responded to the consultation; 52 responses were received to the survey and a further 16 individuals attended the foster carer fee consultation events.

Of the 52 survey respondents, 62% were in favour of the proposed changes to the fees, 14% neither agreed nor disagreed and 25% disagreed with the proposed changes. In order to summarise this feedback, the responses have been broken down into three categories; 1) Existing Foster Carers, Kinship carers and Special Guardians 2) Prospective Foster Carers 3) Leicestershire County Council Staff. A summary of the findings by each category is provided below.

Of all the survey respondents, 77% agreed or strongly agreed that the proposed fee structure was easy to understand with 12% tending to disagree or strongly disagreeing. Some confusion over the proposed fee structure was also expressed in the fostering fee consultation events.

***1) Consultation Feedback from current LCC Foster Carers, Kinship carers and Special Guardians.***

Of the 68 consultation responses, 55 foster carers responded to the consultation, 39 through the survey and a further 16 in person through the foster carer consultation events.

The table included at figure 1 below provides a break-down of foster carer responses to the fee consultation survey based on the fee level they identified as currently fostering at (where carers selected more than one level they have been proportioned across the results so as not to unfairly bias the results).

Figure 1 shows that of the 39 foster carers who completed the survey, 56% were in favour of the proposed changes to the fees, 13% neither agreed nor disagreed and 31% disagreed with the proposed changes.

APPENDIX A Figure 1: Current Foster Carers Online Survey Responses

Foster Carers who responded by existing fee level	Strongly Agree or Tend to Agree			Neither Agree nor Disagree				Tend to Disagree or Strongly Disagree				Total FC responses	
	# of FC responses	% of total FC responses	% of FC responses by level	Example comment	# of FC responses	% of total FC responses	% of FC responses by level	Example comment	# of FC responses	% of total FC responses	% of FC responses by level		Example comment
Level 0	3.2	8%	68%	"I feel more foster carers will benefit and the payment will fit the child's needs on a one to one basis, with recognition for foster carers and a clearer payment scheme"	0.5	1%	11%	"There would be no change to my situation." – NB if this carer is a level 0 they would receive a rise to level 1	1	3%	21%	"I agree but in my opinion, I would like to think that people don't foster just for this reason"	5.2
Level 1	3.2	8%	56%		0.5	1%	9%		2	5%	35%	"With regard to the lower band I feel that carers who have been fostering for a year are being penalised as brand new carers with no experience with be entitled to the same pay"	5.2
Level 2	4.2	11%	81%	"Proposed changes are much easier to understand and the higher starting payment will be more of an incentive for new foster carers"	1	3%	19%	"I'm on level 2 therefore I will have no benefit"	0	0%	0%		5.2
Level 3	5.7	15%	51%	"For people coming into fostering these days financial support is needed to help them provide the care for children in need"	2	5%	18%	"In my case nothing changes"	3.5	9%	31%	"All levels should get an increase not just the top and bottom, to make us as foster carers feel valued. It is 24/7 not 9-5 therefore payments needs to reflect this. Also babies should be paid a higher level and it would be good to have a retainer for when we don't have a placement".	11.2
Level 4	3	8%	38%	"More fairly reflects complexity and work involved in placement based on needs of the child"	1	3%	13%	The changes do not seem to make a lot of sense'	4 <sup>1</sup>	10%	50%	"I feel that I should get a pay rise, we all do the same fantastic job, and should be paid accordingly to it" "In the proposed changes, level 4 is to be removed and I will be paid level 3 which amounts to £100 less per child, per week...if the changes do go ahead I would have to reconsider my position as to whether this would be financially viable"	7
Level 5	1.5	4%	50%		0	0%	0%		1.5	4%	50%	" you plan on cutting pay to the higher carers, they will leave and go private"	3
Level 6/ Specialist	1.2	3%	100%		0	0%	0%		0	0%	0%		1.2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>56%</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>13%</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>31%</b>			<b>39</b>

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<sup>1</sup> One of these respondents selected that they are a member of staff but it is clear from their responses that they were principally (or only) responding in their remit as a level 4 carer so their results are included here

Common reasons cited in support of the proposed changes included judgments that carers deserve more recognition in their fees; that the new fee structure is easier to understand; and that the proposed needs-based payment system for specific cases more fairly reflects the complexity and work involved in caring for specific children. Some carers reported that they were pleased that recognition of children with additional needs would look at both financial and non-financial packages of support and fed back that it felt like LCC was not just throwing money at issues which wouldn't necessarily solve the problem.

Frequent reasons cited from those who 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with the proposed changes were that the changes had no direct impact on them.

Common reasons cited in disagreement with the proposed changes were that some carers agreed with the changes but felt strongly that there should be an increase with all levels not just the highest and lowest ends of the scale. There were a small number of concerns expressed by current level 1 carers who felt that the differential between those carers with a year's experience and training and those without should be maintained.

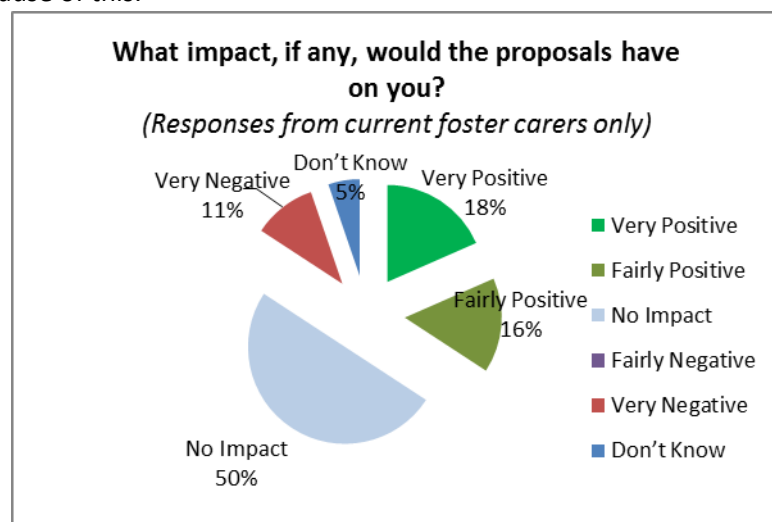
Carers who disagreed with the proposed changes who currently foster at levels 4 and 5 were concerned that the proposed changes could lead to a loss of income for them depending upon the assessed needs of the child in their placement.

Carers in both the survey and at the consultation event also fed back that they were unsure what the requirements for additional payments according to the needs of the child meant in terms of the financial element and were equally unsure of the category and level of need of the child that would qualify for this support. Two carers also reported concerns over a fee structure based on the needs of the child as they felt this could lead to more placement moves for a child where there needs have de-escalated and a carer has a reduced income because of this.

Of the existing foster carers who responded to the consultation survey, 34% said the proposed changes would impact on them very or fairly positively, 50% said the proposed changes would have no impact on them, 11% said the changes would have a very negative impact, and 5% said they did not know what impact the proposals would have.

Some detailed feedback was also received on the specialist fostering schemes. This included

- **Parent & Child:** Comments in support of the proposed increase to the parent and child payment rate as the cost of having an adult living in the home would be more realistically supported in the proposed structure. Some carers questioned whether the proposed increase was sufficient and one carer indicated that a neighbouring authority pays approximately £100 more per week for this provision.



- **One2One:** Feedback that more information is needed on the one2one specialist scheme and how this differs from caring for a child who is being cared for by a mainstream carer but has been assessed as having additional needs.
- **Pathway Foster Care:** Comments in support of the new pathway foster carer scheme and expressions of interest in joining this scheme
- **Emergency Foster Care:** Strong feelings that the proposed emergency out of hour payment rates are not sufficient and should be addressed
- **Short Break Specialist:** Strong feelings that the short break specialist fostering fee should be increased as this scheme has not had an increase in a number of years and is an incredibly difficult role. Carers also reported that the name of short break level 1 and 2 payment levels caused confusion with the mainstream level 1 and 2 categories.
- **Respite Foster Care:** There were a number of carers who reported that there is not enough respite care available and that they felt the fee should be increased in order to be able to attract more people to the role. Current respite carers fed back that the overnight rate is not appropriate to the level of work involved.

A number of carers fed back that they would like to be able more easily and quickly use our own networks to support placements – both through other foster carers and family and friends and possibly through babysitting and child minding services. The service is looking to address methods for supporting these arrangements and will feedback on these arrangements at the end of April 2018.

Many carers pointed out the difference between local authority and IFA fees. Some carers also suggested introducing retention payments or rewards for length of service.

## **2) Consultation Feedback from Prospective Foster Carers**

There were only three responses from individuals identifying themselves as prospective foster carers. This is thought to be due to the short consultation window and limited communications to non-LCC foster carers. Of these 100% of the respondents agreed with the proposals to change the fostering fee structure.

Reasons cited for the agreement with the proposed changes included support of the removal of the level zero category and comments about the proposal being a fairer way to reflect the different needs of children and experience and skills of foster carers.

Feedback from this category also suggested that the additional payments and support on offer for children with additional needs should be clearer and that there are activities the service can undertake to improve marketing and recruitment activities.

## **3) Consultation Feedback from LCC Staff**

In total nine members of staff responded to the consultation survey. Of these 8 agreed with the proposed changes (88%) and 1 disagreed (11%)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> There were 10 responses that identified themselves as a member of staff but of these there was one whose responses to later questions revealed that he/she is actually a foster carer. This response has been added to the foster carer feedback summary

Reasons for agreement reflected the need for us to be more competitive to attract more foster carers and recognise the excellent work that our foster carers do. Staff indicated the difficulty of competing with independent agencies and other local authorities who pay more. Feedback from staff also stated that the current system does not work as we have level 4 carers being paid for placements for children who do not warrant this level of payment.

The reason given for disagreeing with the proposed changes is because the structure “still does not compare with IFA payments and you have to bear in mind IDA SSW hold a maximum of 12 cases allowing them to offer a great deal of support, supervision and monitoring”.

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