

SUBJECT:	Improving the Offer to Monmouthshire Foster Carers
DIRECTORATE:	Social Care & Health
MEETING:	Individual Cabinet Member Decision
DATE:	26th March 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to present the case for investment in generic in-house foster carers to recruit and retain foster carers and improve placement sufficiency. The overall aim is to increase the number of children's placements with in-house foster carers. Achieving this will reduce costs and improve outcomes for children who are looked after (CLA).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

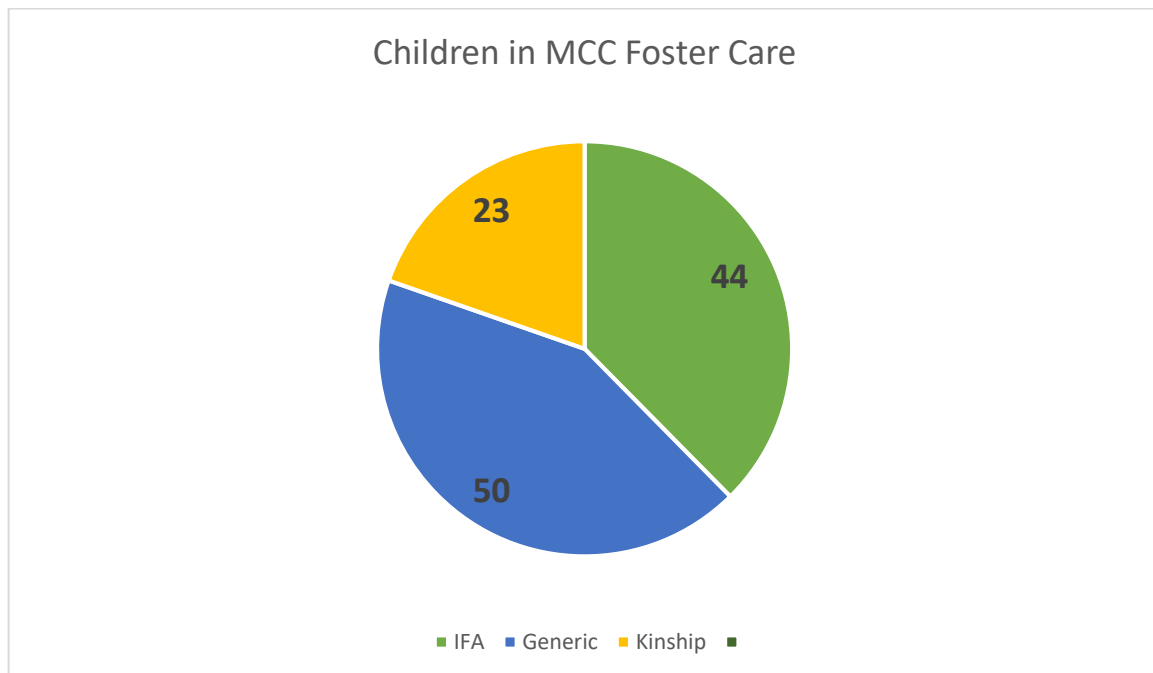
- 2.1 To maintain allowances just above the National Minimal Allowance set by Welsh Government, but to address the anomaly whereby allowances drop once a child reaches age 5. This would mean that the fostering allowance will remain at £253 for any child aged between 0 – 15 and then increase to £273 at age 16 (based on 25/26 rates).
- 2.2 To increase the fees paid to Monmouthshire (in-house) foster carers in line with Model 2 which uses 23.75% of weekly average earnings in Gwent as a baseline and retains the 3 tier payment for skills framework.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Monmouthshire is recruiting foster carers in a highly competitive market. Currently across the UK more foster carers are leaving fostering than are becoming foster

carers. Recruitment and retention of foster carers is a significant problem across Wales and the rest of the UK. The Welsh Government Elimination of Profit policy, whilst laudable, has destabilised the market further meaning that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find IFA or residential placements when we need them.

- 3.2 At 28/02/2025, the number of children who are looked after and living with foster carers is 116 (59% of all children who are looked after). Of these 116, 22 live with kinship carers and 94 children with unrelated foster carers. Of those 94 children living with unrelated foster carers 44 (47%) live with IFA carers and 50 children (53%) live with MCC generic foster carers. In addition, there are 19 children currently living in residential children's homes, 7 (37%) of whom would be more appropriately placed in foster care, however, there are no foster placements available.



- 3.3 We have worked hard to reduce our reliance on IFA provision, however, we remain heavily dependent on private providers which places MCC in a highly vulnerable position on a number of levels:

- The cost of IFA placements, is significantly in excess of the cost of in-house provision. An IFA placement will cost anything from almost £800 per week to £1,647 per week.

- IFA foster carers are not supervised by MCC supervising social workers. This makes it harder to provide the quality assurance that placements may need.
- Many IFA foster carers provide an excellent level of care for the children they foster, however, the data shows that unplanned placement moves can be higher for IFAs. In Q1 and Q2 2024/25 there were 8 unplanned moves, 5 from IFA placements and 3 from MCC foster carers.
- Placing children with in-house foster carers means we are placing with foster carers we know well; their strengths and vulnerabilities. We can put in the support and training they may need to promote placement stability and matching is unaffected by any profit incentive.
- IFA placements are far more likely to be out of county. 31 children in IFA placements are outside Monmouthshire. 17 of these are in other Gwent authorities, 4 are in Bridgend, 3 are in Gloucestershire, 3 are in the Vale of Glamorgan. There are also placements in Rhondda Cynon Taff, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot.

3.4 **Demand Context**

We currently have 36 generic fostering households in Monmouthshire. Whilst foster carer retention is generally good, we have an aging population with 66% of our foster carers being over 50 and 17 being over 60. It is likely that 10 fostering households will be lost to Monmouthshire County Council over the next 5 years.

- 3.5 According to analysis undertaken by Foster Wales, we need to recruit fostering households able to provide placements for up to 80 children, which is potentially anything between 30 – 70 fostering households by 2027. This takes account of the loss of current carers together with the need to cease the use of IFA placements (for new children and where there are placement changes).
- 3.6 A fostering strategy in place which has helped the council achieve a small increase in fostering households, but despite every effort we are not on target to meet this demand, and a more radical approach is required.

3.7 The Need to Invest

The nature of fostering has changed over recent times. In the general population it is rare that families can afford for one parent not to go out to work. Whilst it is true that foster carers do need (usually) a spare room and definitely a big heart, they also need the skills, patience, time and resources to invest in building relationships and caring for traumatised children. If we are to effectively support our foster carers, we must recognise and compensate carers for their time and skills. This includes recognising that for many of our children, they will need carers who have a great deal of flexibility and availability, such that may influence the type of other employment that can undertake. Having the right level of fees and allowances and other financial benefits are therefore a key component in recruiting and retaining the foster carers we need.

- 3.8 MCC does not offer competitive rates within the region. We are aware that there are foster carers living in Monmouthshire who foster for other local authorities although we would not know exactly how many. The lower fee level for Monmouthshire carers may be a contributing factor for some of these carers choosing not to foster for MCC. What this means in practice is that we are not only competing with IFAs, able to offer significantly higher payments at the local authority's expense, but we are also in competition with other neighbouring local authorities. Whilst money will not be a factor in the decision to foster for some carers, for many, especially where there is a need or expectation for there to be a foster carer who is available to the child all the time, the fees element will make a significant difference to whether fostering is possible or not.
- 3.9 A recent briefing for local authority commissioners from the NAFP (Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers) highlights that IFAs are finding recruitment and retention challenging. They note that demand for placements from local authorities outstrips supply, especially for sibling placements, parent and child placements and placements for children coming out of residential care. This highlights how competitive the field is for recruiting foster carers.
- 3.10 The NAFP note that the vast majority of foster carers who transfer to IFAs are transferring from local authorities. They report that financial gain is not the primary motivation, however, our experience of foster carers discussing with us, moving

to IFAs, and where enquirers have chosen to pursue their enquiry with an IFA rather than the local authority, finances are given as part of the reason for this.

- 3.11 The proposal is to provide a revised (uplifted) fees and allowances structure for Monmouthshire carers which would bring Monmouthshire in line with the region. This, together, with the existing benefit and support offer (which is positive) would make us significantly more competitive and should help us both attract new carers and provide a good incentive for our current carers to remain. Although this will place an immediate pressure on the budget it should be a cost saving measure over time and provide better outcomes for children who are looked after.

3.12 **Supporting Data and Evidence**

Foster Care Allowances

Foster carers are remunerated in two ways, fees and allowances. Allowances are intended to cover costs incurred in caring for a child. WG sets a National Minimum Allowance (NMA) for foster carers according to the child's age. The NMA for Wales 2025/26, MCC's allowance rates, and the Fostering Network's recommended rates are set out below. MCCs provisional allowance for 2025/26 (including an inflationary uplift pegged to indicative local government salary uplifts) is comparable with the NMA and other local authorities in the region.

Foster Care Allowances 2025/26	0-4	5-10	11-15	16-17
NMA	£224	£204	£204	£255
MCC – current if raised by inflation	£253	£222	£222	£273
MCC - proposed	£253	£253	£253	£273
Fostering Network recommended allowance	£250	£332	£428	£428

- 3.13 It is proposed to maintain allowances just above the NMA, but to address the anomaly whereby allowances drop once a child reaches age 5. The higher allowance for babies was intended to cover costs such as nappies. However, it does not take into account that children aged 5 – 15 will require more food, more expensive clothing and more spent on them in terms of leisure activities. What this means in practice is that the fostering allowance will remain at £253 per week for any child aged between 0 – 15 and then increase to £273 at age 16.

- 3.14 There are currently 51 children aged between 5 and 15 so maintaining the fostering allowance in line with children under five would cost an additional £1,581 per week. This represents a budget pressure of £82,212 per year.
- 3.15 Additionally, there are approximately 61 children who are on Child Arrangements Orders or Special Guardianship Orders that the local authority provides financial support to at the same rate as fostering allowances less Child Benefit. Including this group of children would cost an additional £98,332.
- 3.16 This represents an overall budget pressure of £180,544

3.17 Foster Care Fees

Fees are an amount paid to carers in recognition of the work of fostering. BGCBC and MCC link fees to the skills and experience of foster carers. CCC and NBC link fees to the age of the foster child. TCBC pays a flat fee to all foster carers. Currently, MCC pays the lowest fee within the Gwent region, see tables below.

Weekly fees – MCC and BGCBC

Local Authority	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Blaenau Gwent	£75	£125	£127
Monmouthshire	£61	£72	£92

Weekly fees – CCBC, NCC, TCBC

Local Authority	0-4	5-10	11-15	16-17
Caerphilly	£140.76	£180.35	£203.44	£203.44
Newport	£137.00	£170.00	£181.00	£180.00
Torfaen	£161.07	£161.07	£161.07	£161.07

3.18 IFA Placement costs

IFAs are able to pay foster carers significantly more in fees because of the profit they make from local authorities. There is no standard scale of costs that local authorities are charged even by a single IFA, as costs vary depending on whether the placement is considered 'therapeutic', or child is considered to higher need.

Currently the costs of an IFA placement range from £791.95 to £1,647 per week inclusive of both the fee element and the allowance. There are more placements costing over £1,000 than there were six months ago (7 up from 5), there are also fewer placements costing under £800 (1 down from 8). The mean average cost of an IFA placement is £987.15. The median average cost is £910.90. The majority of placements cost in excess of £930. The profile of the current IFA placements is as follows (the number totals 43 rather than 44 as one placement is a parent and child foster placement and is akin to a parent and child residential rather than a standard foster placement).

- 1 placements costs between £791.95
- 18 placements cost between £800 - £899
- 17 placements cost between £900 - £999
- 7 placements cost between £1,000 - £1,999

3.19 We have no information about how much IFA foster carers actually receive of this in terms of fees and allowances as this is commercially considered sensitive information and is not shared. However, IFA fostering adverts promise potential foster carers a minimum combined allowance and fee of around £400 - £500 per week per child. They also offer additional payments where a child has additional needs or challenges, plus other financial rewards and incentives such as bonuses for long service of up to £1,000, winter heating payments etc.

3.20 **Payment for Skills**

MCC is one of two authorities that allocates fees based on payment for skills payment according to a competency framework. It is proposed that the Skills Level model of fee payments is retained. Keeping a skills framework linked to fees rewards foster carers who continue to develop their skills and competencies, it recognises those foster carers caring for children with additional challenges where foster carers will need further training, and acts as an incentive to carers to engage in support groups which keeps them connected as part of the fostering community as well as training and development.

3.21 The Skills Framework has recently been updated in collaboration with the Workforce Development Team and Placement and Support Team and is

currently being consulted on with foster carers. An audit is being undertaken of all current foster carers to ensure that when they transition to any new fees payment they are meeting the required criteria for this. In consultation with foster carers, a three month transition period has been agreed to ensure foster carers who may not be fully meeting all the criteria for the level they are currently on, are able to do so.

3.22 The minimum requirement for approval as a foster carer is successful completion of Skills to Foster Training, Agency Decision Maker approval following Fostering Panel and positive engagement with a Supervising Social Worker. This is a minimum standard that all foster carers are expected to achieve.

3.23 Under the revised Skills Framework, progression to Level 1 will require foster carers to be working towards the following:

- Have an active L&D profile with a plan for completion of core training within 6 months
 - First Aid
 - Introduction to Child Protection
 - Safe Caring
 - Diversity/Equal Opportunities
 - Recording
- Have an allocated buddy and have attended one support group meeting
- Active engagement in supervision to be evidencing:
 - Good, safe, nurturing and accepting care that meets the individual child's holistic needs including setting appropriate boundaries for the child
 - Completion of good quality daily logs for children in placement
 - Ability to work with the child's network including family and other professionals
 - Ability to support the child's development
 - Ability to reflect on their own learning and draw on support when they need it.

3.24 To progress to Level 2, foster carers will be expected, in addition to the above, to be working towards the following:

- Be on track to have a positive first annual review
 - Have an active L&D profile and have completed the core training above and a plan for the following training within the next 6 months
 - Child Development 0-8
 - Child Development 8-18
 - Attendance at 50% of support groups
 - SCW Induction Framework underway with a plan for completion within a designated timescale
- 3.25 To progress to Level 3, foster carers will be expected, in addition to the above, to be achieving the following:
- Positive annual reviews
 - Additional training above the minimum requirement of 15 hours a year
 - Completion of the Fostering Wellbeing Master Class
 - One foster carer within the household being available at all times
 - Mentoring and/or buddying other foster carers
 - Contribution to training and recruitment
 - Active engagement in supervision to evidence:
 - An ability and willingness to care for children who have experienced significant neglect, abuse, disruption and loss in their life, including children who have been in residential care.
 - An understanding of attachment theory and application to the care of children and teenagers
 - Proven experience of providing care for children who regularly present with behaviours which cause significant management problems and ability to implement strategies that are effective in managing difficult behaviours.
- 3.26 A key element of the skills fees is the requirement to engage in foster carer support groups. This is because foster carer retention is linked to foster carers coming together, getting support from each other and becoming part of a foster carers' community.

- 3.27 It is anticipated that most generic foster carers will attain level 1 within 3 – 6 months of approval. Currently kinship foster carers have information about skills payments and the same opportunity to progress, however very few progress as for most kinship carers, especially those who go on to become Special Guardians, the bureaucracy and additional work of progression through the Skills Framework is not something they chose to do. In some cases, kinship carers do progress through the Skills Framework, where this happens this is usually because they are intending to become generic foster carers.
- 3.28 A range of different options for fees were explored and discounted. Fees based on children's ages were discounted as this option assumes that older children are more difficult to place. This is not necessarily the case, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to place younger children. Having a flat fee for all carers was also considered but discounted as it was felt this would not recognise or reward those foster carers willing and able to offer homes to children presenting more complex challenges where additional training would be required. Reducing the number of skills levels to two was also considered but discounted because it was felt that this would not recognise or encourage incremental progression and might act as a disincentive if foster carers felt the requirements for the upper level were too hard to meet.

3.29 **Proposal for Increased Fees**

In considering what a competitive and appropriate fee might be, we have taken account of regional fee rates as a percentage of average weekly earnings. Average earnings in MCC according to the ONS are £713.70 per week. This brings the current average skills payment to 10.5% of the average weekly wage. The average fostering fee payment would need to be increased to £129 to match Blaenau Gwent (18% of the average weekly wage) and increased to £193 to match Caerphilly (27% of the average weekly wage), see table below.

Fostering fees as a % of average earnings

Local Authority	Average wage 2023	Average fostering fees payment	Fees as a % of average wage
Caerphilly	£648.20	£174.85	27%
Newport	£653.20	£167.00	25.6%
Torfaen	£659.10	£161.07	24.4%

Blaenau Gwent	£600.90	£109.00	18%
Monmouthshire	£713.70	£75.00	10.5%

3.30 23.75% of the weekly average wage is the average fee rate within the region and has been used as a benchmark to generate 2 models. To create a scale that can be aligned to a skills framework, which is recommended, this has been broken into three points at around 15%, 25% and 30% giving an average of 23.33%.

3.31 **Model 1**

23.75% of average earnings in Monmouthshire is £169.50. Using the breakdown above, of approximately 15%, 25% and 30%, this works out as follows.

- Level 1 £107
- Level 2 £178.42
- Level 3 £214.11

This fee scale would provide an average fostering fee of £166.51, which would broadly match NCC and TCBC (£167 and £161 respectively) exceed BGCBC (£109) but not match CCC (£181).

Model 1	Post-approval	Level 1 @ £107	Level 2 @ £178.42	Level 3 @ £214.11	Total
Generic placements	0	10	8	28	46
Kinship placements	32	1	0	0	33
Total MCC placements	32	11	8	28	79
Weekly cost	£0	£1,177.00	£1,427.36	£5,995.08	£12,023.44
Annual cost	£0	£61,204.00	£74,222.72	£311,744.16	£447,170.88
Current cost					£198,796.00
Budget pressure	£248,374.88				

3.32 **Model 2**

It is noted that the average Monmouthshire salary is higher than the rest of the region. An alternative would be to take an average across the region. This recognises that fees may be less of an incentive for more affluent families within Monmouthshire County Council.

3.33 If an average of salaries across the whole of Gwent was used as the baseline, this would work out at £655.02. 23.75% of Gwent average earnings is £155.74.

Using the breakdown above, of approximately 15%, 25% and 30%, and then rounding these figures to create an even scale, this works out as follows:

- Level 1 £100
- Level 2 £150
- Level 3 £200

Model 2	Post-approval	Level 1 @ £100	Level 2 @ £150	Level 3 @ £200	Total
Generic placements	0	10	8	28	46
Kinship placements	32	1	0	0	33
Total MCC placements	32	11	8	28	79
Weekly cost	£0	£1,100	£1,200	£5,600	£7,900
Annual cost	£0	£ 57,200	£62,400	£291,200	£410,800
Current cost					£198,796
Budget pressure	£212,004				

3.34 This fee scale would provide an average fostering fee of £150, which is higher than BGCBC (£109) but lower than NCC, TCBC and CCC (£167, £161 and £181 respectively).

3.35 **Model 3**

An alternative funding model could be to base amounts on fostering fee payments across the region. The scale below is based on using the lowest regional payment as level 1, the average fee payment across the region (£154.75) as level 3 and selecting a mid point between these two, for level 2.

3.36 Using the following three point scale would give an overall average fee of £108 which is 70% of the regional average. This would mean that MCC remains out of step with the region (59% of CBC, approximately 66% of NCC and TBCB) but in line with BGCBC.

- Level 1 £75
- Level 2 £100
- Level 3 £150

3.27 **Model 2 is recommended.**

The rationale for recommending Model 2 is that it retains the three skills levels. This is felt to be important in developing the skills of our foster carers and also in terms of creating a fostering community which is important for retention. Payments are linked to a clear and transparent skills framework and are evenly distributed across the three levels enabling progression over time and with the support of the foster carers supervising social worker. It is recognised that at the lowest level MCC's offer is lower than CCC, NCC and TCBC, however at the upper level it broadly matches the highest payment in the region. It is believed (and evidence of the current tiered approach supports this) that this approach encourages foster carers to progress to level three. There is an expectation that level 3 carers are sufficiently trained, skilled and willing to accept placements of children coming out of residential care. This is critical if we are to reduce our usage of residential care where children would be more appropriately cared for by foster carers.

- 3.38 As noted above, Model 2 provides an average fee payment of £150. Whilst this does not match TCBC average fee payment of £161, NCC's average fee payment of £167 or CCC average fee payment of £181.99 the upper fee scale matches CCBC, the highest in the region, and overall it is felt that the fee scale represents an offer that will encourage recruitment and retention and incentivise foster carers to increase their skills and competencies.
- 3.39 Under Model 2, a Monmouthshire Foster Carer at Level 3 would be receiving £453 per week for one child (Fee £200, Allowance £253). This is comparable to the payments advertised by IFAs (£400 - £500). With the Council Tax discount already agreed and the additional support we provide, this will make fostering for MCC attractive and competitive compared with fostering through an IFA.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION

- 4.1 Children who are looked after are a particularly vulnerable population as they have all experienced, to varying degrees, significant loss and trauma. MCC has a corporate parenting responsibility to these children to safeguard and promote their wellbeing as they would their own children. Having sufficient, high quality, foster placements is key to this. A full impact assessment is included at appendix A.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The options are set out in the table below:

	Description	Costs	Benefits	Disbenefits/risks	Recommended
Option 1	Retain current fees and allowances structure	Cost neutral	This would reduce the pressure on the budget in the short-term	Failure to recruit and retain foster carers leading to a continued reliance on expensive IFAs over whom we have minimal control. Changes in the legislation will also mean that we won't be able to make new placements with for profit providers. Insufficient placement capacity leads to some children, including young (primary aged) children being placed unnecessarily in residential children's homes when they would be much more appropriately cared for in foster care.	No
Option 2	Adopt model 1 increase in fees	£248,374.88	Increasing fees will assist in recruitment and retention of additional foster carers. Recruitment of additional foster carers will mitigate the cost as we will be able to bring children out of high cost placements or prevent children from being placed in high cost placements. It will also benefit children by keeping them closer to the people and communities that matter to them.	Increased cost of current placements	No

			<p>This would bring MCCs fees broadly in line with two neighbouring authorities and more closely in alignment with the rest of the region although it does not match the highest paying authority. Increasing allowances in line with Gwent makes us competitive in the region and so represents a good marketing opportunity for MCC.</p>		
Option 3	Adopt model 2 increase in fees	£212,004	<p>Increasing fees will assist in recruitment and retention of additional foster carers. Recruitment of additional foster carers will mitigate the cost as we will be able to bring children out of high cost placements or prevent children from being placed in high cost placements. It will also benefit children by keeping them closer to the people and communities that matter to them.</p> <p>This fee scale still means the average MCC fee is lower than the average fee in 3 of the other 4 Gwent authorities, however it brings MCC closer to alignment.</p> <p>Increasing allowances makes us more competitive in the region and so represents a good marketing opportunity for MCC.</p>	Increased cost of current placements	Yes

Option 4	Adopt model 3 increase in fees	£104,104	Increasing fees will assist in recruitment and retention of additional foster carers. Recruitment of additional foster carers will mitigate the cost as we will be able to bring children out of high cost placements or prevent children from being placed in high cost placements. It will also benefit children by keeping them closer to the people and communities that matter to them.	Increased cost of current placements This fee scale would mean that MCC was still out of step with the rest 3 of the 4 other Gwent authorities meaning we would not be competitive within the region. If the fee uplift is set too low, this may result in an increased budget pressure is generated with no positive outcome	No
Option 5	To address the anomaly whereby allowances drop once a child reaches age 5.	£82,212 (plus cost of whichever option is selected above)	This will promote placement stability for children as they get older, it will help foster carers feel treated fairly and promote recruitment and retention.	Increased cost of current placements	Yes together with option 3 (model 2)

6. EVALUTATION CRITERIA

6.1 Recruitment of carers is monitored within the current Fostering Strategy including numbers of inquiries generated through to final approval rates. Data is tracked and monitored against recruitment activity to identify what is most effective in terms of raising the profile of fostering and recruiting foster carers for Monmouthshire. In terms of retention, we monitor levels of satisfaction of foster carers through annual appraisals and wider engagement opportunities and ensure that the reasons why any foster carers stop fostering are fully understood. Alongside of data specifically relating to foster carers, the overall distribution of children's placements is monitored so that we can monitor the % of children placed with Monmouthshire carers.

6.2 For 2025/2026 the targets are: 50 initial inquiries; 16 follow up visits and 11 approvals. There are currently 4 foster care assessments in progress.

7 REASONS

7.1 The rationale for the proposal for improving the fees paid to foster carers to make them competitive with the rest of the region is set out above. Principally it is designed to help make fostering for the local authority more attractive and financially viable in an environment where IFAs are aggressively recruiting.

7.2 MCC has insufficient in-house foster placements for the children in its care causing a dependency on IFA placements. This is both costly and also makes us vulnerable in the light of the Elimination of Profit agenda. The MCC offer to foster carers is not currently competitive, even across Gwent authorities. Given that foster carers can receive significantly more money for fostering with IFAs, MCC must find ways of making fostering for the Local Authority as attractive as possible if it is to recruit sufficient foster carers and retain the carers we have.

7.3 It is accepted that the current financial situation for all local authorities is an extremely difficult one. These proposals are advanced on the basis that recruiting and retaining

sufficient foster carers makes good economic sense as it reduces MCC's reliance on high-cost IFA and residential placements, and achieves better outcomes for children.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The overall recommendation is to agree Model 2 (Option 3) being £212,004 plus an uplift in allowances for children aged 5-15 totalling £180,544 resulting an overall total budget pressure of £392,548.
- 8.2** A pressure of £386,724 was incorporated into the budget setting process for 25/26. The slight increase in pressure has been caused because the amount was based on the allowance rates for 24 /25. The additional amount will be allocated from the existing core budget for children's services.

9. Consultees

Social Care and Health DMT
Foster Carers
Placement and Support Team

10. Background Papers

None

11. AUTHOR: Charlotte Drury

CONTACT DETAILS

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Integrated Impact Assessment document

(incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio Economic Duty)

Name of the Officer Charlotte Drury Phone no: 07811 234244 E-mail: chalottedrury@monmouthshire.gov.uk	Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal To improve the fees paid to foster carers to bring them in line with the region and therefore to improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers.
Name of Service area All directorates	Date 02/03/2025

1. **Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics?** Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	Children who are looked after are a particularly vulnerable population as they have all experienced, to varying degrees, significant loss and trauma. MCC has a corporate parenting responsibility to these children to safeguard and promote their wellbeing as they would their own children. Having sufficient, high quality, foster placements is key this.	None	Improved fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC and increase foster carer recruitment and retention.
Disability	None identified	None identified	None identified
Gender reassignment	None identified	None identified	None identified

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Marriage or civil partnership	None identified	None identified	None identified
Pregnancy or maternity	None identified	None identified	None identified
Race	None identified	None identified	None identified
Religion or Belief	None identified	None identified	None identified
Sex	None identified	None identified	None identified
Sexual Orientation	None identified	None identified	None identified

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
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Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice	Outcomes for many care experienced people are poorer than for the general population. It is critical therefore that we seek to provide children with the best support possible and this means also providing those who care for them with appropriate support which includes financial support and recognition.	None identified	None identified
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3. Policy making and the Welsh language.




How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favourably	None identified	None identified	None identified
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	We will continue to seek to recruit carers who have Welsh language skills so that children can be placed placements which best meet their identity needs.	None identified	Recruitment campaigns run in both Welsh and English
Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	<u>.None identified</u>	None identified	None identified



4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	Improving fostering fees and bringing them into line with the region will make fostering a more financially viable option, promoting the recruitment and retention of foster carers and promoting better long term outcomes for children who might otherwise have to be cared for in residential children's homes.	Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and land, river and coastal ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	Placing children closer to home can help reduce carbon emissions through less travelling.	Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	Improving fostering fees and bringing them into line with the region will make fostering a more financially viable option, promoting the recruitment and retention of foster carers and promoting better long term outcomes for children who might otherwise have to be cared for in residential children's homes..	Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	Improving fostering fees and bringing them into line with the region will make fostering a more financially viable option, promoting the recruitment and retention of foster carers and promoting better long term outcomes for children who might otherwise have to be cared for in residential children's homes.	Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local	None identified	None identified

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
social, economic and environmental wellbeing		
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	Improving fostering fees and bringing them into line with the region will make fostering a more financially viable option, promoting the recruitment and retention of foster carers and therefore reducing the number of children who might otherwise need to be placed out of Wales in residential children's homes or IFA placements.	Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	Improving fostering fees and bringing them into line with the region will make fostering a more financially viable option, promoting the recruitment and retention of foster carers and promoting better long term outcomes for children who might otherwise have to be cared for in residential children's homes.	Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC

5. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Long Term</p> <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>Improving fostering fees and bringing them into line with the region will have a financial impact on MCC in the short term, if this leads to improved recruitment and retention of foster carers this will reduce MCC's reliance on high cost IFA placements and reduce the number of children being placed in residential children's homes when they would be more appropriately cared for in foster care and at a much greater cost. In the long term, this not only makes financial sense but also promotes better long term outcomes for care experienced people.</p>	<p>Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC</p>
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>Adopting this as a council policy promotes a collegiate approach across the council and opportunities to raise the profile of this issue with partners.</p>	<p>Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC</p>
 <p>Involvement</p> <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	<p>Financial support is given by foster carers as one of their top priorities in a recent survey by Fostering Network.</p>	<p>Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Prevention</p> <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>MCC's foster carer population is aging and unless we are able to recruit new foster carers, MCC is going to continue to be reliant, or worse still, increase it's dependence on high cost IFA and residential placements. Investing in foster carers will be critical if we are to get close to achieving placement sufficiency, an outcome that is both better for children and more financially sustainable for the local authority.</p>	<p>Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC</p>
 <p>Integration</p> <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>Adopting this as a council policy promotes a collegiate approach across the council and opportunities to raise the profile of this issue with partners.</p>	<p>Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC</p>

6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	MCC has a duty to protect and safeguard children who have been impacted by harm or abuse. This proposal is in line with MCCs safeguarding responsibilities.	None identified	Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC
Corporate Parenting	This policy speaks directly to the councils corporate parenting responsibility.	None identified	Enhanced fees will be used to promote fostering for MCC

7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

Placement Commissioning Strategy – data on placement and CLA numbers
 Fostering Strategy 2023-26 – data on recruitment and retention of foster carers
 Foster Wales – data on placement sufficiency

8. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

.This section should summarise the key issues arising from the evaluation. This summary must be included in the Committee report template

Investing in foster carers is key to working towards placement sufficiency and placement sufficiency is critical if we are to meet the 2027 deadline for Eliminate and also if we are to reduce MCC's reliance on high-cost IFA and residential placements which are neither in the best interests of children nor the local authority. Whilst improving fostering fees and bringing them more in line with fees across the Gwent region does come at a financial cost to the local authority, it has the potential to support existing foster carers to remain fostering

as well as encourage people who are considering fostering to foster for MCC rather than an IFA or different local authority. In the cost of living crisis, it may also encourage people who have not thought about fostering to consider becoming foster carers.

9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
The impact of this will be monitored through monitoring the number of fostering enquiries, the conversion rate from enquiry to approval and the retention of foster carers.	Annually as part of the review of MCC Fostering Strategy	C Drury

10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
	<i>e.g. budget mandate, DMT, SLT, Scrutiny, Cabinetetc</i>		