

Cabinet Member Briefing Note

Foster Friendly Policy (new)

To: Cabinet Member for Organisational Excellence

Date: 5th February 2021

Author: Interim Employee Relations & Policy Lead

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To advise the Cabinet Member of the new Foster Friendly Policy.
- 1.2 To inform the Cabinet Member that a new Foster Friendly Policy has been produced that will support the Council to gain the Fostering Friendly Status Award.
- 1.3 The new policy intends to allow our workforce, who are looking to become Foster Carers to take 9 days of paid leave, to given over a year, in a flexible manner to support SBC foster carers to attend meetings that they will need to attend for children, school exclusions and other support for a child settling into a placement.
- 1.4 This new policy supports Priority 4- Help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults and Pledge 20 - Increase the number of foster carers in Swindon so that every 'child looked after' is placed in their home borough when they should be.
- 1.5 The implementation of this policy will support the recruiting and retention of an engaged, motivated and flexible workforce to deliver the vision for Swindon into the future.

2. Recommended Action to be taken by Officers Under Delegated Powers

Recommended that the Cabinet Member agrees that:

- 2.1 The Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development be authorised, under Article 14.06.01, Part Two of the Constitution, to introduce and apply the new Foster Friendly Policy attached at Appendix One to this report.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The Council recognises that in order to be the most modern, effective and efficient Council we can be, we depend on recruiting, engaging and developing staff with right skills, knowledge and behaviours to deliver the strategic plan and ensure excellence in service delivery and professional practice. The Council is committed to supporting staff

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Sonia Grewal, Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development, Direct Dial Telephone 07823525459, E-mail: sgrewal@swindon.gov.uk.

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who are looking to become / or are Foster Carers. For the Council to receive the recognition it deserves by gaining the Fostering Friendly Status Award, a policy that support our staff is imperative.

- 3.2 By becoming a foster carer, you can change the lives of children and young people who are in need of a caring family to set them on a positive path through their life and open them up to experiences they may not have had otherwise.
- 3.3 The process of seeking approval to become foster carers is a lengthy one and places a number of reasonable but demanding expectations upon prospective carers, particularly in relation to the training, assessment and approval process.
- 3.4 We understand that foster carers who do other work, in addition to fostering, need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child. With providing our employees 9 days (pro rata) per year to enable them to support them through the fostering process will prove Swindon Borough Council recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care.
- 3.5 Swindon Borough Council's Fostering Friendly policy is supported by the Corporate Management Team and the Leader of the Council.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The alternative option is not to have a policy, however this would jeopardise the Council in gaining the Fostering Friendly Status Award. This may also discourage staff from applying to become a Foster Carer as it may appear that the Council is not supportive of staff become Foster Carers when the Council does so much promoting within the Community for residents to become Foster Carers.
- 4.2 Another alternative is to have a policy but not to allow our workforce to have paid time off work to support them through the fostering process. We already have an enhanced Paternity Leave Policy, Maternity and Adoptions processes whereby staff have enhanced paid time off work.

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5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no procurement implications, however, they may be some financial implications of providing additional leave, particularly whereby replacement staffing may be required to cover. However, any such costs will be minor in comparison to the broader benefits of implementing a Foster Friendly Policy. .

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 This policy has been produced in accordance with best practice and research into other local authority's policies and processes. Other legal and human rights have been taken into account in preparing this Cabinet Member Briefing Note. It is considered that the recommendations are consistent with Convention rights.

Climate Change Impact

- 5.3 The proposals would not bring a change in service delivery and Officers believe that there is no expected effect on the Council's carbon footprint.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.4 There are no other implications to the Council in implementing a Fostering Friendly Policy.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment has been produced for this policy and a copy can be obtained from the report author. The DIA confirmed that this provides an opportunity for employees who are considering to becoming foster carers with the reassurance that the Council will support them in doing so, and will foster good relations within the community and the Council.

Risk Management

- 5.6 The implementation of the new policy does not breach employment legislation and will therefore minimise any risk to the Council in respect of any claims to an employment tribunal.

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6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (s151 officer) and Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 Fostering Friendly Policy
8.2 Appendix 2 Foster Carers FAQs

9. Declarations of Interest

- 9.1 Cabinet Members are reminded to consider whether they have any known interests in any of the matters referred to in this Briefing Note. If such an interest exists this should be declared to the Monitoring Officer (or Committee and Member Services Manager), and they should take no part in the consideration of the Briefing Note and should refer the Briefing Note to the Leader of the Council instead for consideration.

10. Sign-off

- 10.1 The Cabinet Member is requested to respond with 5 days of the date of this report by 10th February 2021.
10.2 The Cabinet Member is requested to indicate one of the following responses to the Recommendations set out in Section 2 of this report:

[to be signed electronically and redacted for publication]