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## **SCOTTISH BORDERS FOSTER CARER MILEAGE RATE AND REVIEW OF ALLOWANCES AND FEES**

**Report by Director Social Work & Practice**

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### **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**29 September 2022**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report proposes an increase in the mileage rate for Foster Carers and a formal process of reviewing allowances and fees for carers.**
- 1.2 Since 2004, Scottish Borders Council's foster carers have been paid 35.1p per mile for use of their private vehicles when the journey is in addition to "day to day" expenses. This mileage rate has remained static and no review has taken place. It is now considered appropriate to review the mileage rate for foster carers and align this to the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rate of 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p thereafter; this rate applies to SBC employees and volunteer drivers who use a private car for business mileage. The rate applies across all fuel types.
- 1.3 At the time of the current mileage rate of 35.1p per mile being agreed, foster carers were travelling a total of c. 93,000 miles per annum. Whilst the number of miles has reduced since this time, and has been impacted as a result of restrictions during COVID-19, foster carers continue to utilise their own vehicles for activities additional to "day to day" business.
- 1.4 It is therefore proposed that approval is given to remunerate foster carers at the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rate of 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p per mile thereafter, when the journey is additional to "day to day" expenses, and that this change takes effect from 1 August 2022. It is further proposed that a formal process of reviewing allowances and fees for carers is introduced and that this forms part of the annual budget setting process, and is informed by officers.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **Scottish Borders Council is recommended to agree:**
  - (a) to remunerate foster carers at the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rate of 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles**

**and 25p thereafter, when the journey is additional to “day to day” expenses, and that these rates commence with effect from 1 August 2022; and**

- (b) that a formal process of reviewing allowances and fees for carers is introduced, and that this forms part of the annual budget setting process, and is informed by Officers.**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Since 2004, Scottish Borders Council's foster carers have been paid 35.1p per mile for use of their vehicles when the journey is in addition to "day to day" expenses. This includes attending training events, support groups, meetings (Reviews, etc.), to or from respite carers/family time, non-routine health appointments, school travel out-with catchment area e.g. if a child has moved from another locality to that of the foster carer. Day to day travel costs, which includes travelling to/from school within a catchment area, visiting friends, journeys to leisure activities, day trips, and shopping, are all met via the foster carer allowance. This mileage rate has remained static and no review has taken place.
- 3.2 It is now considered appropriate to review the mileage rate for foster carers and align this to the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rate of 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p thereafter; this rate applies to SBC employees and volunteer drivers who use a private car for business mileage. The rate applies across all fuel types.

### **4 ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 At the time of the current mileage rate of 35.1p per mile being agreed, foster carers were travelling a total of c. 93,000 miles per annum. Whilst the number of miles has reduced since this time, and has been impacted as a result of restrictions during COVID-19, foster carers continue to utilise their own vehicles for activities additional to "day to day" business.
- 4.2 In many cases the use of private vehicles removes the need for social work staff to travel with children and young people or the use of taxis, both of which are considerably more impactful in terms of resource and cost.
- 4.3 It is also noted that the current "cost of living crisis" is impacting on foster carers and their ability to undertake journeys out-with "day to day" travel.
- 4.4 Whilst undertaking a review of the mileage rate, it has also been identified that there is no systemic approach to reviewing allowances and fees paid to foster and kinship carers, and that any uplifts are generally agreed, either at the time of budget setting by Elected Members without input from officers, or within the service without independent scrutiny and approval. This issue is now addressed by the recommendations in this report.
- 4.5 The National Review of Care Allowances reported in September 2018, made 12 recommendations aimed at improving the consistency and transparency of support for kinship and foster families. The recommendation of the review was to "improve consistency and transparency in the delivery of child allowances" and Recommendation 3, specifically called for the Scottish Government and CoSLA to consider a Scottish Recommended Allowance for children in kinship and foster care. Whilst work is underway regarding the introduction of the Scottish Recommended Allowance it is likely that this may take time to be agreed and implemented.
- 4.6 It is therefore proposed that approval is given to remunerate foster carers at the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rate of 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p per mile thereafter, when the journey is

additional to "day to day" expenses, and that this change takes effect from 1 August 2022. It is further proposed that a formal process of reviewing allowances and fees for carers is introduced and that this forms part of the annual budget setting process, and is informed by officers.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

The additional cost of funding the increased mileage will be met from existing budgets in 2022/23 and will form part of the budget setting process for 2023/24.

### **5.2 Risk and Mitigations**

With the growing cost of living crisis, there is a risk that foster carers may not wish to use their private vehicles for transport out-with "day to day" provision. Aligning with the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment will mitigate this risk by encouraging foster carers to continue or increase additional travel, and therefore reduce staff time and costs or use of taxis.

### **5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment**

By increasing the mileage rate for journeys out-with "day to day" expenses, this will bring foster carers in line with other Council staff.

### **5.4 Sustainable Development Goals**

The proposals in this report will assist the Council in complying with UN Sustainable Goal No. 10 "Reducing inequalities within and among countries" by providing services in a non-discriminatory way.

### **5.5 Climate Change**

While the increase in mileage allowance may lead to an increase in travel, it is considered that the benefits to foster children from such journeys will outweigh the potential increase in travel.

### **5.6 Rural Proofing**

The increase in mileage rates will impact on all foster carers so there will be no discrimination for those living in rural areas.

### **5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

### **5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

No changes are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Acting Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted and any comments received will be reported at the meeting.

**Approved by**

**Stuart Easingwood**

**Director Social Work & Practice**

**Author(s)**

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**Background Papers:** Nil

**Previous Minute Reference:** Nil

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. John Fyfe can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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