

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

13 July 2015

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources – Councillor Gannon

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of Resources

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Foster Friendly Employers Scheme

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide information and proposals to support the recommendations made by the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) for Coventry City Council to become a Foster Friendly Employer.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources is asked to:

- Approve the introduction of leave entitlement for foster carers
- Support the promotion of the Foster Friendly Employer Scheme to other local employers.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No.

Report Title:

Foster Friendly Employer Scheme

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 To support the on-going recruitment and retention of Foster Carers, who are employees of Coventry City Council, recommendations were made by the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Task and Finish Group on Fostering to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) on 26th March 2015. The recommendations were for Coventry City Council to become a Foster Friendly Employer ensuring that this is in addition to other family friendly policies that the Council may have.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Foster Friendly Employers is the Fostering Network scheme, designed to support and recognise employers who support fostering. Companies such as Asda, Boots, Tesco, Sainsbury's, O2, the Department for Education, the LGA, and a number of Local Authorities are some of the organisations that have been recognised as Foster Friendly Employers. These organisations provide a range of entitlements. Some only during the application and assessment stage to become a foster carer, and others also provide leave following approval.
- 2.2 Cumbrian County Council introduced the scheme 'Become a Foster Friendly Employer' which gives local businesses the opportunity to support the Council's work to recruit more foster carers, by making some simple changes such as, recognising the needs of foster carers in employment policies and helping to celebrate fostering and foster carers. In recognition of the support the Council raises the profile of businesses committed to Cumbria's vulnerable children through their media partner at events and in council publications.
- 2.3 Foster Carers are not automatically entitled to as many of the family friendly rights that biological or adoptive parents enjoy. Although there is no legal obligation to do so, it is open to an employer to grant foster carers a short period of leave to enable them to attend training, meetings or for settling the child into his or her new environment.
- 2.4 Coventry City Council's Flexible Working Policy provides the opportunity for all employees, with 26 weeks continuous service, to manage their work life balance by requesting a change in their working hours. The Council's Compassionate Leave and Emergency Time off for Dependents Policy applies to foster carers and provides unpaid leave to respond to certain unexpected or sudden emergencies in relation to a dependant.
- 2.5 There are currently four employees within Coventry City Council who are established foster carers. It would be difficult to anticipate if this will increase and over what period of time.

2.6 To provide an incentive to recruit and retain foster carers it is recommended to;

- introduce an entitlement of up to five days leave for employees applying to become an approved foster carer for Coventry, and three days leave for employees who currently foster for Coventry. This will enable them to attend meetings and training.
- to promote, through the Family Placement Service, the Foster Friendly Employer Scheme to other local employers.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

None

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

It is planned to introduce the new entitlement from 20th July 2015.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

5.1 Financial Implications

If 3 days leave entitlement is provided to foster carers who currently work for Coventry City Council this would represent a salary cost equivalent of c£1,600. This would, not represent an additional cash-cost to the Council but would result in reduced productivity.

It is difficult to anticipate if adopting the Foster Friendly Employers Scheme will result in an increase in the number of foster carers, who are also employees of Coventry City Council. However, any future lost productivity is very unlikely to ever reach a cost that is significant in comparison with the overall City Council budget and these costs would anyway be far outweighed by the potential gains in terms of the reduced costs within the Council's looked after children budgets. This will be monitored over the long term.

5.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

6. Other Implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the achievement of the Council's key objectives/ corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The recruitment and retention of foster carers contributes towards the Council's priority to improve the quality of life for Coventry people by helping to protect and support the most vulnerable.

- 6.2 **What is the impact on the organisation?**
To support the on-going recruitment and retention of foster carers within Coventry.
- 6.3 **Equalities EIA?**
This recognises the needs of staff members who foster for Coventry and enables them to balance their work and caring responsibilities.
- 6.4 **Impact on the environment?**
None
- 6.5 **Implications for partner organisations?**
None

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