

## Record of Urgent Executive Decision(s)

### 1. Subject of decision

New Policy for Calculating Financial Support for Special Guardians

### 2. Name and Title of Decision Maker

Jacqui Old, Head of Education, Care and Safeguarding

### 3. Details of any Conflict of Interest and any Dispensation granted in respect of such Interest

No Conflict of Interest / Dispensation

### 4. Executive summary (To be taken from written report)

Special Guardianship provides a child or young person who cannot be cared for by their parents with legally permanent care. It is an alternative to adoption and long-term foster care or residential care. Special Guardians are assessed by the Authority to assure their suitability to be carers for the child or young person requiring permanent care. The Authority is also required to assess what support the Special Guardians may require, including financial support. The Authority is required to support Special Guardians financially where otherwise suitable Guardians have financial issues such that without financial support they would not be able to become Guardians for a child or young person. This is a matter determined through calculation by the Authority.

On 11 September 2017 Cabinet authorised the Head of Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding to implement a new policy revising the method of calculation used to determine the amount that eligible Special Guardians are entitled to receive as an allowance from the Authority to support permanent care of a child or young person.

A new, revised policy is now ready for immediate implementation. The new policy varies from that previously in place by ending use by the Authority of a percentage-based calculation and replacement with simple equivalence between the maximum amount to which an eligible Special Guardian is entitled and the maximum amount a Foster Carer is entitled to.

The revised policy has taken into account legislation, guidance, case law and national and regional practice. It has also been informed by the findings of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman following investigation into the practice of the Authority in relation to the method of calculation used. Accordingly, immediate implementation will ensure that children and young people within the Borough who require permanent care by Special Guardianship are supported to do so by carers who are not financially disadvantaged. It will also ensure that the issues identified by the Ombudsman have been addressed and resolved. Immediate implementation will afford Special Guardians confidence that the Authority values their contribution and seeks to work in partnership with them as they care for vulnerable children.

## **5. Alternative Options considered**

Immediate Implementation

Deferral of implementation

Non-implementation

## **6. Decision(s)**

Immediate implementation will ensure that children and young people within the Borough who require permanent care by Special Guardianship are supported to do so by carers who are not financially disadvantaged. It will also ensure that the issues identified by the Ombudsman have been addressed and resolved. Immediate implementation will also afford Special Guardians confidence that the Authority values their contribution and seeks to work in partnership with them as they care for vulnerable children.

## **7. Reasons for the Decision(s)**

Immediate implementation will ensure that children and young people within the Borough who require permanent care by Special Guardianship are supported to do so by carers who are not financially disadvantaged. It will also ensure that the issues identified by the Ombudsman have been addressed and resolved. Immediate implementation will also afford Special Guardians confidence that the Authority values their contribution and seeks to work in partnership with them as they care for vulnerable children.

## **8. Date Decision Made**

20 February 2018

**9. Is this decision subject to call-in and if so expiry date of call-in period**

No - the decision is not subject to call in.

**10. Date of Publication**

26 February 2018

**11. Implementation Date (if decision not called in)**

26 February 2018

\*Note – this is an Urgent Decision and not subject to call-in, as agreed by the Chair of Council.

The reason for urgency is as follows:

Immediate implementation will ensure that children and young people within the Borough who require permanent care by Special Guardianship are supported to do so by carers who are not financially disadvantaged.

It will ensure that issues identified by Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman following investigation into the practice of the Authority in relation to the method of calculation used are addressed and resolved.

Immediate implementation will afford Special Guardians confidence that the Authority values their contribution and seeks to work in partnership with them as they care for vulnerable children.