

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Employment Committee  
**Date:** 25 March 2019  
**Report for:** Decision  
**Report of:** Sara Saleh, Corporate Director of People

### Report Title

**Fostering Support policy.**

### Recommendation(s)

**It is recommended that Employment Committee notes the content of this report and approves the new Fostering Support Policy so that it can be implemented.**

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Sara Saleh  
Extension: x4146

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	This proposal aligns with the council's Corporate Priority 'Reshaping Trafford Council'.
Financial	None.
Legal Implications:	There is no statutory provision for leave for foster carers, only when an individual is in a foster to adopt situation (covered by the adoption legislation).
Equality/Diversity Implications	None.
Sustainability Implications	None.
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	This shouldn't have a big impact on staffing as the number of staff who foster is likely to be low.
Risk Management Implications	None.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	None.
Health and Safety Implications	None.

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Trafford Council has a range of family friendly and flexible working policies, and we are always looking at what additional provision might be appropriate to support our staff. Currently we have specific provision in place for staff who are also foster carers.
- 1.2 Trafford Council has a statutory responsibility for looked after children and acts as a Corporate Parent to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for children who are looked after by the Council. Fostering is one of the approaches in our strategy to improve the outcomes of children in care, and we are trying to increase the number of foster carers.
- 1.3 Although some foster carers don't work, some do and if we are to increase the number of foster carers, we will have to encourage individuals in lots of different situations to consider fostering.
- 1.4 We want to encourage our staff to consider foster caring and we acknowledge that to combine fostering with a job can be difficult and requires a certain amount of understanding and flexibility. The DfE and Fostering Network's 2014 report 'Combining Fostering and Other Work' explores the experiences of foster carers in relation to having other work and concludes that more employers need to be 'fostering friendly' by providing support to staff who also foster.

## **2.0 THE POLICY**

- 2.1 It is proposed that we introduce a Fostering Support Policy which has the aim of providing staff with information to find out more about fostering and which provides tangible support and flexibility.
- 2.2 The policy will give staff who are either going through the assessment process to become a foster carer or who are a foster carer up to 5 days' paid leave in a 12 month period in order to undertake foster care related commitments. This is in line with suggested good practice. When benchmarking was last undertaken across GM Councils only one had a policy with an unspecified number of days of paid release each year. 5 days is suggested good practice and shows a commitment from the Council to support these staff.
- 2.3 The policy also details that if staff need any more time off they can request authorised paid time off which would be agreed if at all possible. In addition various other options which support flexibility are highlighted.

## **3.0 BENEFITS**

- 3.1 Putting in place such a policy will support one of the Council's aims to provide the best outcomes for our looked after children. The policy will support staff who foster, increase awareness of fostering and may make some staff consider this.
- 3.2 The policy will improve our employment offer, as part of our aim to be an 'employer of choice'. We can promote our organisation as a 'Fostering Friendly Employer' through the Fostering Network.

3.3 If we are to encourage other organisations in our borough to be fostering friendly we firstly need to have a policy in place to role model good practice.

#### **4.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

4.1 We plan to implement the new policy on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. A new intranet page will be created with a link to the new policy.

4.2 When staff take the leave they can request it via the HR system MiTrent self-service using a newly created fostering leave code. For those who don't use self-service they can submit a form via email.

4.3 We will promote the new policy with a fostering campaign to raise the profile of fostering.

#### **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 The introduction of a Fostering Support policy will make it easier for staff who are applying to become foster carers or who already undertake this role, to balance the commitment with work so enhancing work-life balance. Once the policy is adopted, the Council can sign-up to be a 'Fostering Friendly Employer', through the Fostering Network and then encourage other organisations to do so. This will support our wider corporate aim of improving the outcomes of our looked after children

Employment Committee are recommended to support the new policy and the implementation plan.



# TRAFFORD COUNCIL

## FOSTERING SUPPORT POLICY

Author	Human Resources
Date	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2019
Version	1.0

## Version Control

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Change History</b>
V1.0	April 2019	Kate Sturman	First version

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# **TRAFFORD COUNCIL – FOSTERING SUPPORT POLICY**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Fostering is looking after a child or young person when they cannot live with their own family, which may be for a number of different reasons.
- 1.2 Trafford Council has a statutory responsibility for looked after children, which includes many children who are in foster care. We recognise and value the contribution that foster carers make to society and our community and especially the lives of children in care.
- 1.3 We understand that foster carers who work in addition to fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child and to maintain their own well-being. We want to encourage staff to consider fostering and when they do, to provide appropriate support.

## **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 This policy details how staff can find out more about fostering and the support that is available if they already foster or if they apply to become a foster carer and while they foster.

## **3. Scope**

- 3.1 This policy covers all employees of Trafford Council with the exception of Teaching and Support Staff employed by Schools.

## **4. Becoming a foster carer**

- 4.1 Employees can find out more about fostering through Trafford Council's Fostering webpage and on the A to Z of HR on the intranet.

## **5. Time off for fostering commitments**

- 5.1 The council will give paid time off work of up to 5 days in total (pro-rata for part-time staff) in a 12 month period (April to March), for the following commitments:
  - Assessment and initial training prior to the approval as a foster carer.
  - Attendance at panel for approval.
  - Child review meetings, annual foster carer review meetings.
  - Foster carer training.
- 5.2 Applications for leave should be approved by the employee's manager and supported by documentation/letter confirming the requirement. The leave can be booked using MiTrent, or the GMSS portal.
- 5.3 If staff require additional leave they can make a request for authorised unpaid leave and consideration will be given as to whether this can be agreed where at all possible.

## **6. Additional flexibility**

6.1 The Council also recognises that employees going through the fostering approval process or fostering may need additional flexibility, especially when a child is initially placed and when issues arise. We have lots of ways of supporting and the following can be considered as appropriate:

- Flexi-Time Scheme
- Flexible Working.
- Agile Working.
- Career Break.
- Special Leave – dependants, emergencies and bereavement.
- Leave Purchase Scheme.

## 7. **Review**

7.1 This policy will be periodically reviewed in order that that it remains appropriate to the Council's operation, is best practice and meets legal requirements.