

Extended early education funding for children in foster care

**Solihull Family
Information Service**

Case Study – 30hrs entitlement for foster carers

Context

A child who was Looked After by Solihull council was accessing a full time childcare place at a childcare setting in another borough. The child was accessing their universal early education funded hours (up to 15 hours per week) but the remaining cost (of over £500 a month) was funded by the Solihull Council under the sponsored daycare scheme. This arrangement allowed the foster carers to continue to work after the child came to live with them.

Children cared for by foster carers who work outside of their fostering role may be eligible for an extended early education funded place (up to 30 hours per week instead of up to 15 hours). The foster carer contacted Solihull Family information Service to ask if they can apply for this funding to access the additional funded hours instead of using the sponsored daycare scheme.

The request from the foster carer was received just 2 weeks before the termly application deadline (set by HMRC) and we were able to explain the time pressure for this application which requires input from their supervising social worker, the child's social worker and the Independent reviewing officer (IRO). Further to the time pressure of the application process there was a complication that the other local authority requires any early education funded places to be booked by the same deadline or they will not be able to offer any of the funded hours at all. If this deadline had been missed the local authority would have needed to fund all of the hours which would have cost over £1000 per month).

What we did

The supervising social worker was not available to co-ordinate the process so, to avoid missing the deadlines, Solihull Family Information Service did so.

This involved gathering the required evidence of employment from both foster carers, seeking confirmation from the child's social worker and the IRO that the additional care was in line with the child's care plan and finally overall seeking authorisation from the manager of the fostering service to process the application. Solihull Family Information Service was able to issue the eligibility code to the foster carers in advance of the HMRC deadline.

When calling the childcare setting which is based in another borough they said that to continue to access the place of 30 hours per week the carers would need to pay over £290 every month. They explained that they require children to attend for 30 hours per week all year round and the early education funding is only available during term time. The carers only needed the care during term time but the childcare setting refused to allow the child to attend only during term time.

Neither the carer nor the social worker were happy with this, so there was an agreement made to cease the placement at the current nursery and search for an alternative. Solihull Family Information Service liaised with the childcare setting about their notice period and deposits so that the carers agreed a final date to leave the current setting and make their final payment.

Solihull Family Information Service and the foster carers carried out an urgent search for alternative childcare providers who could offer the care so that we could ensure this was booked before the required deadline. The carer wanted to use a particular childcare setting which was, again, in a different borough and we were able to ensure they were happy to offer the care totally free of charge and using the attendance pattern required. The booking was finalised in advance of the deadlines.

Solihull Family Information Service

Call: 0800 389 8667

Email: familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

Web: www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Outcome

Enabling the carer to access the full extended hours saved the local authority from having to continue paying for sponsored daycare at a cost of over £500 per month for 12 months (when the child was due to start reception) which would have cost Solihull council over **£6300**

Stepping in to ensure the 30 hours application was made and processed in time for the termly HMRC deadline saved the local authority paying for an entire 14 week term under sponsored daycare so saved the local authority over **£1700**

Helping the carer to move the child's care to an alternative childcare provider who was able to offer the early education funded place on a term time only basis saved the carers over £290 per month for 12 months (until the child was due to start reception) which would have cost them over **£3500**

Feedback received from the foster carer concerned:

The foster carers took the time to send an email thanking the member of staff involved and explaining the impact their support and this funding had for them.

They described the funding as a "lifeline" as they are still working but reducing their hours to be able to give the child the time they need. They described that "This funding has greatly reduced the pressure on us due to the situation. A nursery place is something that we could not have afforded at present time but desperately needed in order to manage day-to-day"

Solihull Family Information Service

Call: 0800 389 8667

Email: familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

Web: www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL