

**CABINET  
5 DECEMBER 2023**

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**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IN DARLINGTON  
ENSURING PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY AND ENABLING CREATIVE ALTERNATIVES**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member –  
Councillor Nick Wallis, Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director –  
James Stroyan, Group Director of People**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To outline a series of proposals to reduce dependence on costly external placements, and to support and improve placement sufficiency for children and young people in Darlington.

**Summary**

2. Sourcing placements for looked after children is at crisis point nationally with an increasing reliance on high-cost unregulated emergency placements or expensive residential care due to a lack of more appropriate placements. This issue has been compounded in Darlington by increases in our looked after population and the mandated National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
3. The increased number of children cared for by Darlington Borough Council, coupled with a lack of placement sufficiency has resulted in a significant increase in placement expenditure along with a reduction in placement stability for children and young people looked after by Darlington Borough Council.
4. A range of responses to these challenges have already been implemented which includes a panel to provide the needed peer challenge and ensure when a decision is made to make a child looked after, it is after all other options have been exhausted. There is a strong focus on discharging Care Orders where children are living with parents.
5. These measures on their own cannot effectively meet the scale of the pressure. Darlington do not have the in-house sufficiency to meet the diverse needs of children downstream and our baseline support offer benchmarks negatively in the region in terms of core support.

6. A number of service critical proposals have been developed in response (summarised in **Appendix 1**) which comprise the enhancement and growth of:
  - (a) The DBC foster care service.
  - (b) DBC directly provided children's residential care services.
7. The proposals avoid an overreliance on high-cost external placements and support the growth of step down and transition to adulthood provision in response to increase demand.

### **Recommendation**

8. It is recommended that Cabinet consider the report and support the proposals, and progress to Council within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) process.

### **Reasons**

9. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons: -
  - (a) The current overreliance on externally provided children's social care placements is unsustainable.
  - (b) The Council needs to diversify the range of directly provided children's social care services in order to meet the needs of Darlington children and improve placement stability.
  - (c) The proposals have a positive impact on the MTFP.

**James Stroyan**  
**Group Director of People**

### **Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications for Crime and Disorder arising from these proposals.
Health and Wellbeing	There are positive impacts for the health and wellbeing of Darlington children and young people arising from these proposals.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no implications for Carbon Impact and Climate Change arising from these proposals.
Diversity	There are positive impacts for the health and wellbeing of Darlington children and young people arising from these proposals.
Wards Affected	The proposals are need led for all Darlington children and young people.
Groups Affected	Children and young people are positively impacted.
Budget and Policy Framework	The proposals will be incorporated into and have a positive impact on the draft MTFP for 24/25 – 27/28
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	These proposals will contribute positively to the Council Plan
Efficiency	These proposals would make us more efficient
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	These proposals will have a significant benefit for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Background

10. As at the 31 March 2023 there were 136 young people in an external placement arrangement. The costs associated with external placements are significantly higher than our internal costs:
  - (a) There is a £532 per week difference (equivalent to £27,738 per placement per annum) between Darlington Borough Council foster carer and Independent Foster Agency (IFA), which will be exacerbated by a pending Consumer Price Index (CPI) award due to IFA providers in April 2024 which will see the IFA placements cost rise further.
  - (b) On average it is £773 per week cheaper to place a young person in an in-house home versus placing within the independent sector for a residential placement (equivalent to £40,304 per child per annum).
11. Having placements directly provided by the Council also has a key benefit for the young person as the level of placement stability tends to be higher and reduces the need for an out of area placement, based on placement availability alone. Placement stability has been on a declining trajectory and the council's overreliance on external

placements is one of the compounding factors. This is further exacerbated by the extreme demand for foster care and residential placements outstripping supply which is enabling external providers to be extremely selective as to which children are offered placements.

### Proposal Summary

12. A number of service critical proposals have been developed in response which comprise the enhancement and growth of the DBC foster care service (Proposals 1-8). There are a number of very specific proposals to ensure the DBC foster service is viable, attractive (and can effectively reduce the number of carers leaving to go to more costly independent providers) with improved retention rates.
13. The proposals will seek to retain the current cohort of 59 Darlington Borough Council foster carers and incrementally grow the foster service by 5 carers in first year and 10 carers in subsequent years. The proposals are outlined below (correspondingly RAG rated) along with their costings.

### Red RAG rated foster care proposals.

#### Proposal 1:

##### **Uplift the age-related payments**

Age related payments are paid towards the direct costs incurred from caring for a child and are received by foster carers, special guardianship carers, and child arrangement carers. The proposal is to increase age related payments by £10 per child per week – costing £180,671 in year 1. This would mean carers are being paid over the minimum set by the government.

##### **Risk of not proceeding**

Carers deregister or move to another Council or IFA in which case Darlington would not only lose the foster carers, but also have to correspondingly increase the payments for the new care arrangement. Foster carers would have less money for the direct care of the children in their care without this uplift.

##### **Likelihood**

High. There are instances where this has occurred already with a significant number of foster carers stating that it is their intent should an improved foster care offer not be made. However, it is felt on balance, should a commitment to proceed with the professional fee increase be made that an uplift to the age-related payment would not have as significant a prioritisation as this proposal does have a scope of carers broader than just foster carers.

##### **Risk of proceeding**

There is a risk that payments to existing foster carers are increased and there is no increase in the number of new DBC foster carers or improvement in the retention of existing carers.

##### **Likelihood**

Low. Whilst this remains a risk it is felt to be low as the primary rationale for prospective carers in not coming to foster for Darlington Borough Council or continuing to foster for Darlington Borough Council is payment rates.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

This proposal is broader than just foster carers. Should the remaining foster care specific proposals be agreed, this proposal could be removed due to its encompassment of a broader caring group which isn't experiencing the same stability risks as the in house foster service.

**Proposal 2:**

**Restructure the professional fees** that are paid to in-house foster carers to be more competitive – cost £138,171 in year 1.

**Risk of not proceeding**

Carers deregister or move to another Council or IFA to care and there continues to be no incentive for carers to care for more complex children.

**Likelihood**

Exceptionally high. There are instances where this has occurred already with a significant number of foster carers stating that is their intent should an improved foster care offer not be made. We currently have one foster carer considering transferring to DBC from an IFA, but only if an improved offer is made. There is another DBC foster carer moving to a bordering Council foster service due to the better financial offer they would receive. A Council in the Tees Valley has significantly improved their fees after losing 21 sets of carers to IFAs in 2022 and has already seen a positive change in enquiries since the new rates were put in place. On this basis uplifting the professional fees is considered to be one of highest priorities in the foster carer proposals.

**Risk of proceeding**

There is a risk that payments to existing carers are increased and there is no corresponding increase in the number of new DBC foster Carers or improvement in the retention of existing carers.

**Likelihood**

Whilst this remains a risk, the likelihood is felt to be low as the primary rationale for prospective carers in not coming to foster for Darlington Borough Council is payment rates of which the professional fee represents the most significant payment. There is a low risk that the IFAs will correspondingly increase their foster agency fees which would negate the benefit of the improved offer for Darlington Borough Council foster carers. The majority of IFAs operating in the Northeast are in a contractual arrangement with all 12 North East councils for a period up at least to 2025 and up to 2028, with pre-set pricing and the provision for annual inflationary uplifts. Other neighbouring councils who have vastly enhanced their foster carer offer and payments have seen positive benefits and did not experience a corresponding fee increase by the IFAs.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

The professional fee uplift is considered to be one of the most critical components of the revised foster care offer. Uplifting the rates is essential to stabilise the fostering service and reduce the risk of carers being lost to other Councils and IFAs. Even with the uplifted rates accounted for Darlington will benchmark in a mid-position against other local authority rates. However, it is felt that the specific component parts of the enhanced offer including, but not limited to; a council tax financial contribution and enhanced professional fees will be significant in incentivising new foster carers.

The payment structure for proposal 2 is shown in the table below.

<b>Current payment arrangement</b>	<b>Proposed payment</b>
Band A £100pw	Band A removed.
Band B £125pw	New Band 1 (Paid to new foster carers) £175pw for the first child and £100pw for subsequent children
Band C £200pw	New Band 2 (Paid to experienced carers who have successfully completed the training and development standards and are able to care for children with diverse needs) £275pw for the first child and £200pw for subsequent children
	New Band 3 (Paid to experienced carers caring for children with more complex needs, who require a very specific form of care) £375pw for the first child (very complex care needs) £300pw for subsequent children (very complex care needs)
	Discretionary additional £100pw for exceptionally challenging to place young people where the only alternative would be bespoke high cost residential.

**Amber RAG rated fostering proposals.****Proposal 3:**

**Provide a financial contribution towards Council Tax** of up to £1,500 for people who are foster carers for Darlington Borough Council. Cost £88,500 in year 1.

**Risk of not proceeding**

Financial viability is becoming a key determiner for foster carers; a Tees Valley council has council tax support to this value in place for their foster carers (as part of a package of enhancements) and have successfully managed to grow their in house foster service and reduce their previous over reliance on IFAs. This is something only Councils can offer and shows the value we place on our foster carers.

**Likelihood**

Is felt to be high. This financial contribution offer is key to having a firm council commitment to incentive individuals to continue to foster for Darlington Borough Council and an effective incentivisation for new foster carers.

**Risk of proceeding**

Is felt to be low, given the continued control the council will have over the payments.

**Likelihood**

It reinforces the Council's commitment to being a direct provider of foster care services and the invaluable role which foster carers play in the care of Darlington children.

Payments will only be made to active DBC Foster Carers on a rolling monthly basis valued at £125 per month via the existing foster care payment run and therefore payments would cease if a carer is no longer fostering for Darlington Borough Council.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

A lower council tax financial contribution could be offered, however, £1,500 is already a rate in place by a subregional Council and would remain a factor in drawing foster carers to other localities. A value of £1,500 reinforces the very significant contribution Darlington Borough Council fosters care make to the care arrangements for Darlington children.

**Proposal 4:**

**Give DBC foster carers the option of taking 14 days paid respite**, which is in line with what is offered in the independent sector – cost £50,822 in year 1.

**Risk of not proceeding**

Paid respite is a consistent offer in both the IFAs, and neighbouring Councils foster care offers. Benchmarking has identified Darlington as a key outlier in not having this arrangement which also risks an increase in carer burn out and placement instability. Foster carers do not receive any payment when they take a break, and this stops people progressing to be foster carers.

**Likelihood**

Is felt to be high. Without the provision of paid respite, it will continue to be a factor in making it more attractive to foster for other Councils or IFAs.

**Risk of proceeding**

Is felt to be low, carers will be given the option as to whether this is something they would wish to be in place for their care arrangement. There is a risk that if all carers wish to have this arrangement that it would take a period of time to implement across all carers whilst new respite arrangements were developed.

**Likelihood**

Should a significant volume of foster carers wish to receive 14 days respite it will require a period of time to implement. The volume will be unknown until the offer is made and officers will work closely with any requesting foster carers in the implementation of this arrangement.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

A lower number of paid respite days could be offered; however, 14 days is the minimum offered by all IFAs and therefore would continue to be a risk factor in drawing carers to foster for other councils or independent providers. A lower than 14 day paid respite period would also increase the risk of carer burn out.

**Proposal 5:**

**Increase the mileage rate paid to foster carers** from 39p per mile to 45p per mile, in line with the HMRC rates - cost £3,000 in year 1.

**Risk of not proceeding**

Transport logistics are a key barrier in co-ordinating viable placements, mileage at HMRC rates are already in place with some regional Councils. Darlington's current mileage rate falls well below the HMRC rate. It is much more cost effective to pay for mileage than source alternative transport and costs are only incurred when transport is provided. Having an effective, reliable, and flexible transport arrangement for foster carer placements is essential to supporting school attendance and court ordered family contact time.

**Likelihood**

Is felt to be high without an increase in mileage rate there is no incentive for carers who can directly transport to do so as the reimbursement rate has not kept pace with the costs incurred.

**Risk of proceeding**

Payments will only be made where a foster carer has undertaken journeys as a direct result of undertaking their foster role.

**Likelihood**

Is felt to be low. Mileage costs will only be paid where transport has been a direct requirement of the fostering role.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

HMRC is the accepted standard rate for mileage costs incurred through professional activity and therefore it wouldn't be possible to scale down from the current proposal.

**Proposal 6:**

**Develop a refer a friend scheme** to pay £250 upon completion of assessment and a further £250 upon the first placement for any foster carer who recommends a friend to foster for Darlington Borough Council - cost £1,500 in year 1.

**Risk of not proceeding**

It is well known that the most effective form of foster carer recruitment is word of mouth. Costs would only be incurred when carers are fully registered with DBC and as a one-off payment when the first placement is made. North Yorkshire are currently offering £500 welcome payments to new foster carers.

**Likelihood**

It is highly likely that without a refer a friend scheme there is little incentive for existing carers to support the DBC foster care recruitment through word of mouth.

**Risk of proceeding**

Is felt to be low, costs will only be incurred when foster carers are recruited and once a placement is made.



**Likelihood**

It would be very unlikely that a new foster carer incentivisation arrangement for existing foster carers does not have a positive impact.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

The above rates are aligned with the offers in place from other fostering providers to support service growth, to reduce further would negate any benefit.

**Green RAG rated fostering proposals.****Proposal 7:**

**Introduce an appreciation payment of £250** to our foster carers to be paid every 5 years – cost £12,750 in year 1.

**Risk of not proceeding**

Overall costs are very low, and it is an effective way of reinforcing the value of DBC foster carers on an periodic basis. It also acts a further incentive mechanism for carers to remain as Darlington Borough Council foster carers.

**Likelihood**

Is felt to be high. Appreciation payments are a positive enhancement to the offer, to continue to keep momentum with foster carers, but not as critical to ensure service stability as some of the higher priority rated foster care proposals.

**Risk of proceeding**

Is felt to be very low. Costs will be fixed and only be incurred on a 5 yearly cycle.

**Likelihood**

Appreciation payments form part of key message of the ongoing value the council places on the contribution of foster carers.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

The time period for the appreciation payment could be extended for example every 7 years, however, given the nominal cost it would have little material gain.

**Proposal 8:**

**Offer an on-call fee of £30 per bank holiday and weekend** to our foster carers to improve placement accessibility in an emergency – cost £5,400 in year 1.

**Risk of not proceeding**

There will continue to be no incentive for carers to give up their time and be restricted in their leisure pursuits to be on call for emergency need. This in turn impacts the resilience of the foster care service in times of urgent need, not having an on-call fee is out of kilter with neighbouring Councils foster carer offer.

<p><b>Likelihood</b></p> <p>Is felt to be high. It will continue to be the case that should a fair acknowledgement via a financial payment not be made to reflect the personal life restrictions from being on call. The rationale for this being rag rated green was due to the fact that it was a separate component to the critical measures to ensure the viability of the DBC foster care service.</p>
<p><b>Risk of proceeding</b></p> <p>Is felt to be low, cost will only be incurred when a small group of foster cares are on-call. The is risk is the on-call payment does not attract a sufficient group of foster carers to have a viable and robust on call rota, the risk of this occurring will be higher however, if no payment is offered.</p> <p><b>Likelihood</b></p> <p>Offering an on call fee is unlikely to not attract a small group of on call foster carers.</p>
<p><b>Proposal rescaling opportunities</b></p> <p>No scaling opportunities have identified given the comparatively nominal rate the on-call fee has been proposed at.</p>

14. Further service critical proposals have been developed in response which comprise the enhancement and growth of the DBC provided residential services to avoid an overreliance on high-cost external placements and support the growth of step down and transition to adulthood provision in response to increase demand. These proposals are outlined below along with their costings.

**All residential service proposals are RAG rated Red.**

**Proposal 9:**

**Increasing the number of taster flats for Care Leavers-** in response to increased demand as an effective mechanism to support the throughput from external placements. Cost year 1 - £43,774.

<p><b>Risk of not proceeding</b></p> <p>The existing taster flat capacity is insufficient for the volume of placement need.</p> <p><b>Likelihood</b></p> <p>Is felt to be high. Taster flats are Ofsted regulated (for 16/17-year-old Care Leavers and Looked After Children) and are critical in supporting preparation for adulthood, they also act as very cost-effective mechanism for stepping children down from external residential care. Without expansion young people will continue to remain in high-cost external placements unnecessarily.</p>
<p><b>Risk of proceeding</b></p> <p>Is felt to be Low, the taster flats are rented by Children's Services, a number from Darlington Borough Council Housing Services and the remainder from local Housing Associations. All rents are set at affordable rent levels. The longest notice period to exit an accommodation arrangement is 3 months. The greatest risk in proceeding will be</p>

securing the required volume of properties owing to the current housing stock pressures which are particularly acute for small affordable rental properties.

**Likelihood**

A small number of potential properties have already been identified at affordable rent levels which could be used for this purpose.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

The number of taster flats are expected to double through this proposal (an additional 7). A lower number of taster flats could be secured, however, that would impact young people's care plans and be more costly as it will reduce throughput and step-down opportunities from higher cost placements.

**Proposal 10:**

**Expansion of Cedars to 7 days a week** – Cedars is an Ofsted registered 3 bed residential service providing in-reach, outreach, and overnight provision (both in the form of planned short breaks and (where required) regulated emergency accommodation provision). Cedars is constrained by currently only operating on a weekend which has resulted in missed opportunities for young people to be supported. The total cost of this in year 1 is £240,531.

**Risk of not proceeding**

Is felt to be high. Cedars is a regulated service and already very effectively demonstrating positive cost avoidance impact, not being available as a 7-day service is constraining service effectiveness and opportunities have been missed for young people and their families to be supported.

**Likelihood**

Without moving to a 7-day provision service impact will be constrained and during the days when there is a need, but the service isn't operational alternative external care will need to be sourced in an emergency which will be very significantly higher cost than Cedars. This scenario is already being experienced, where an urgent external care expenditure could have been avoided if Cedars had been available during the week, this external care could only be secured weekly cost of £11k per week.

**Risk of proceeding**

Is felt to be low. Due to the diversity of the needs of children, it may be the case that a child's needs are so specific they cannot be met via Cedars. It may also be unsafe or inappropriate to provide care to certain children together and therefore a level of more costly external bespoke care provision will continue to be required from time to time for certain children. Depending on the level of alternative care required Cedars could move from cost saving towards cost neutral. The service staffing will be aligned with need and usage requirements.

**Likelihood**

Based on demand levels and care requirements over previous years it is not considered to be a likely scenario that Cedars operating 7 days doesn't have a demonstrable positive impact on care planning and the volume of urgent cost care requirements.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

Should the expansion to 7 days not have the evidential impact expected, the service could revert to weekend operating only or be decommissioned (this is considered exceptionally unlikely given the positive benefit from the current weekend operation).

**Proposal 11:**

**Repurpose of Gilling Children's Home Building—:** As part of the incremental replacement of DBC children's homes to new build accommodation. The existing Gilling children's home (staff and children) will move to a more spacious new build accommodation, envisaged to take place summer 2024. This will leave the current Ofsted registered Gilling building vacant. DBC becoming a larger direct provider is key to the current overreliance on external placements and the strategic approach being pursued by local authorities across the country and in particular in the NE region. The proposal is to repurpose the Gilling building in response to an identified gap in provision for younger children who have a care plan of stepping down to foster care or home and will include additional therapeutic input and support. Cost in year 1 is £642,768.

**Risk of not proceeding:**

Darlington will not have the diversification in their directly provided children's home to meet the needs of our children. This repurpose will provide a care arrangement in an area where we are presently solely reliant on independent providers. The building is well established in the community and there are no capital investment requirements. External children's homes are not as invested in readying children for step down to foster care and without this we will see more children in long term residential care. Given the increase in younger children entering residential care (now from the age of 7) this will be a significant future pressure with current placement costs for a single child at £351k per annum for a period potentially of up to 10 years.

**Likelihood**

Is felt to be high. If Gilling isn't re-purposed our reliance on the independent sector for high-cost placements for children who could in time be stepped down from residential care will not reduce. Children's social care will also lose a well-established asset which could not be easily re-provided at a future point due to the community consultation aspects of the planning process and pressures on accommodation provision.

**Risk of proceeding**

Is felt to be Low, the house in which the residential care service is provided from is well settled in the community and owned by the Council. The staffing for the home would be able to be deployed to other service delivery pressures across children's social care in the unlikely event that the home was under occupied.

**Likelihood**

There has been a consistent need from younger Darlington children for a step-down residential care home and therefore underutilisation is unlikely.

**Proposal rescaling opportunities**

Should the remodelling of Gilling building not have the evidential and positive sufficiency impact expected, the service could be repurposed or decommissioned.

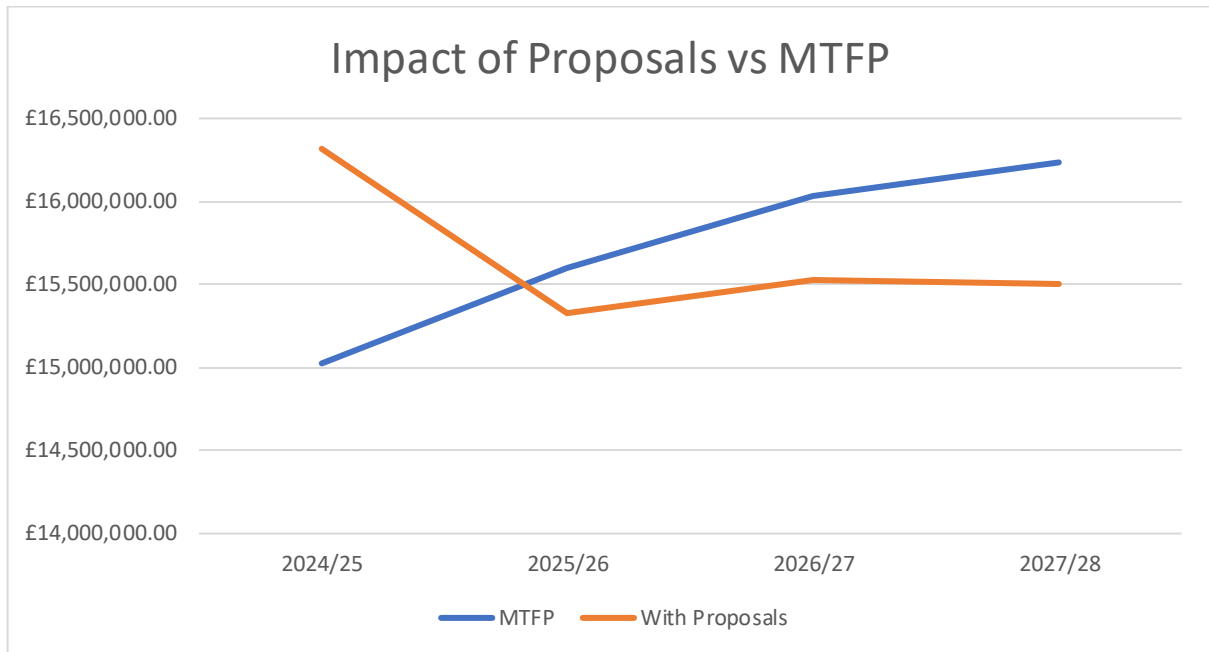
15. A summary of the proposals can be seen in the table at **Appendix 1**

**Financial Implications**









16. The impact for these proposals on the MTFP is outlined in the table and chart below:

Appendix 8




Impact on the Draft MTFP	Cost				Cost Avoidance				Potential Financial Benefit			
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Inhouse Fostering</b>												
Uplift foster payments	180,671	186,091	189,813	193,610								
Restructure Professional Fees	138,171	138,171	138,171	138,171								
Council Tax exemption	88,500	88,500	88,500	88,500								
14 days respite	50,822	50,822	50,822	50,822	(115,490)	(346,470)	(577,450)	(808,430)	365,324	127,014	(100,244)	(327,427)
Mileage	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000								
Refer a friend	750	750	750	750								
Refer a friend passed assessment	750	750	750	750								
Appreciation payment	12,750	0	0	0								
On Call fee	5,400	5,400	5,400	5,400								
<b>Subtotal In House Fostering</b>	<b>480,814</b>	<b>473,484</b>	<b>477,206</b>	<b>481,003</b>	<b>(115,490)</b>	<b>(346,470)</b>	<b>(577,450)</b>	<b>(808,430)</b>	<b>365,324</b>	<b>127,014</b>	<b>(100,244)</b>	<b>(327,427)</b>
<b>Inhouse Residential</b>												
Taster Flats	43,774	39,164	40,184	41,235	0	(63,796)	(66,118)	(68,458)	43,774	(24,632)	(25,934)	(27,223)
Cedars	240,531	250,896	261,945	273,565	0	(486,204)	(483,882)	(481,542)	240,531	(235,308)	(221,937)	(207,977)
Gilling Crescent	642,768	684,199	703,927	724,232	0	(821,705)	(862,791)	(897,303)	642,768	(137,506)	(158,864)	(173,071)
<b>Subtotal Inhouse Residential</b>	<b>927,073</b>	<b>974,259</b>	<b>1,006,056</b>	<b>1,039,032</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,371,705)</b>	<b>(1,412,791)</b>	<b>(1,447,303)</b>	<b>927,073</b>	<b>(397,446)</b>	<b>(406,735)</b>	<b>(408,271)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,407,887</b>	<b>1,447,743</b>	<b>1,483,262</b>	<b>1,520,035</b>	<b>(115,490)</b>	<b>(1,718,175)</b>	<b>(1,990,241)</b>	<b>(2,255,733)</b>	<b>1,292,397</b>	<b>(270,432)</b>	<b>(506,979)</b>	<b>(735,698)</b>



17. In 2024/25 we would anticipate an additional cost pressure of £1,292,397 as a result of these proposals. In 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28 we would anticipate costs savings of £270,432, £506,979 and £735,698 respectively. This assessment has been made on the impact when set against the draft MTFP for 2024/25 – 2027/28 and is based on current and projected children. The in-house fostering investment is expected to see a growth of 35 new DBC foster carers in the period 2024/25 to 2027/28.

Proposal	RAG rating	Risk of not proceeding	Likelihood	Risk of proceeding	Likelihood	Cost (year 1)
<b>Foster Carer proposals</b>						
1. Uplift the age-related payments		Carers deregister/ move to another Council	High	No increase in new foster carers	Low	£180,671
2. Restructure the professional fees		Carers deregister/ move to another Council	Exceptionally high	No increase in new foster carers	Low	£138,171
3. Provide a Council Tax financial contribution		Financial viability will continue to be a determiner for carers/Council commitment not as evident	High	Limited given the council control over the payments paid in monthly instalments	Low	£88,500
4. Give foster carers option to take 14 days paid respite		Carers move to other areas, burn out and placement instability	High	If all carers wish to have this arrangement that it would take a period of time to implement	Low	£50,822
5. Increase the mileage rate paid to foster carers		It is much more cost effective to pay for mileage than source alternative transport	High	Payments will only be made where a foster carer has undertaken journeys as a direct result of undertaking their foster role	Low	£3,000
6. Develop a refer a friend scheme		No incentive for word-of-mouth recruitment	High	Costs only incurred when foster carers are recruited and once a placement is made	Low	£1,500
7. Introduce an appreciation payment of £250		Carers do not feel appreciated on an ongoing basis	High	Overall cost is low and costs will be fixed and only be incurred on a 5 yearly cycle.	Low	£12,750
8. Offer an on-call fee of £30 per bank holiday and weekend		No incentive for carers to give up their time and be restricted in their leisure pursuits to be on call for emergency need	High	The is risk is the on-call payment does not attract a sufficient group of foster carers to have a viable and robust on call rota.	Low	£5,400



Proposal	RAG rating	Risk of not proceeding	Likelihood	Risk of proceeding	Likelihood	Cost (year 1)
<b>Residential Service proposals</b>						
9. Increasing the number of taster flats for Care Leavers		The existing taster flat capacity is insufficient for the volume of placement need.	High	Affordable rent properties with short exit provisions.	Low	£43,774
10. Expansion of Cedars to 7 days a week		Service impact will be constrained by restricted opening times, resulting in a higher volume of high cost urgent care being required.	High	Children will not always be able to be matched together and therefore a reduced level of higher cost care will still be required.	Low	£240,531
11. Repurpose of Gilling Children's Home Building		Darlington will continue to not have the diversification in their directly provided children's home to meet the needs of our children	High	The staffing for the home would be deployed to other service delivery pressures across children's social care in the unlikely event that the home was under occupied.	Low	£642,768

**RAG rating key**Red Amber Green 