

## Revised standard interagency fee for adoption placements in Scotland – start date 1 April 2019

A standard interagency fee charged when adopters approved by one adoption agency are matched with a child in the care of another in Scotland was established in 2016. After consultation with the sector in 2016, the Scottish Government endorsed the interagency fee structure which is used in England. The interagency fee covers the costs of recruiting and assessing prospective adopters, matching, placement and supervision and support up to the point of the adoption order.

In 2017, the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA) undertook a review of the interagency fee structure in England (as it had been in place since 2013) and a new revised fee structure was established in April 2018. The Scottish independent adoption agency sector agreed to postpone the raising of the fee for a year (until January 2019) to allow for consultation work to take place in Scotland.

Following discussions and consultation with the sector, the Scottish Government recommends endorsing the revised fee structure which is used in England.

The following table details the revised fee structure:

| Number of children     | Current fee levels                   | 2019-20 fee levels |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 child                | £ 27,000                             | £ 31,620           |
| 2 children             | £ 43,000                             | £ 63,240           |
| 3 children             | £ 60,000                             | £94,860            |
| 4 children             | £ 68,000                             | £ 126,480          |
| For 5 or more children | To be negotiated on an ongoing basis |                    |
| Ongoing supervision    | £877                                 |                    |

In acknowledgement of year-on-year increases in staff costs the fee levels will be uprated on 1 April each year on the basis of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) measure of inflation for the preceding calendar year as published by the Office for National Statistics.

In coming to the decision to use this particular fee structure, the following was taken into account:

- There was consensus from the adoption sector in Scotland to maintain a standard interagency fee. There was also recognition that costs have risen since 2011 (when the original fee costs were set)
- The findings of the CVAA-led review in England are relevant to the Scottish context
- To ensure that matching decisions are based on the needs of the child without reference to the different costs that would be incurred by placement with different agencies
- To help maximise the number of adopters being approved across Scotland, providing the financial security to allow agencies to recruit beyond their immediate needs
- To maximise opportunities for agencies to use the Adoption Register to find placements for children as quickly as possible, where a match is not immediately available from local resources
- To underpin the importance of providing effective support for adoptive parents and children and young people as being key to the establishment of long-term relationships, stability and improved outcomes for children and young people.

As is the case in England, the fee structure will not be contained within legislation. The fees are payable between adoption agencies and will not be regulated by Scotland's Adoption Register.

We would however, strongly encourage adoption agencies to use this fee structure. By covering the costs of recruiting prospective adopters, this will ensure that adoption agencies can continue to invest in recruiting adopters even if they are matched with children from outwith their local area. In addition to ensuring that the best interests of the child is at the forefront of any potential match, this will also help to maximise the opportunities for children across Scotland who require adoptive placements.

### **Implementation of the new interagency fee**

The review of the interagency fee recommended the following implementation improvements:

- One payment stage at the point of placement
- A revised fee structure for sibling groups
- Annual increases updated on 1 April each year on the basis of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) measure of inflation for the preceding calendar year as published by the Office for National Statistics.

The interagency fee has historically consisted of three parts with associated payment stages. The revised fee structure for sibling groups is also based on these three parts:

1. **Recruitment:** The first part of the fee covers recruitment costs (advertising, training, assessment and approval of prospective adopters). It is proposed that this should be a flat amount per placement, since recruitment costs do not generally vary according to the number of children eventually placed.
2. **Matching:** Part two of the fee covers matching and introductions (including discussions, preparation and support through the process). It is proposed that part two should be proportional to the number of children being placed. This reflects the need to consider children's individual casefiles, attend separate meetings with agency medical advisors for multiple children, and in many cases engage with different foster families.
3. **Support to Adoption Order:** Part three covers the work involved in supporting the family and the individual children during the early stages of the placement, including regular visits to the family, reports to the placing authority, looked after children reviews, and court reports. It is proposed that part three is proportional to the number of children being placed. This reflects each child's need for individual support and contact arrangements; liaison with other services such as schools; and the complexity of supporting a sibling relationship.

The new fee structure sees a move towards a single payment stage at the point of placement. We recognise that financial budgets may be already set for 2019-20 and that a move to a single payment stage in this financial year may be difficult. Therefore, a case by case approach may have to be in place with a local authority to discuss whether a single payment can be organised. However, the aim is to move to a single payment stage for all placements by 2020-21.