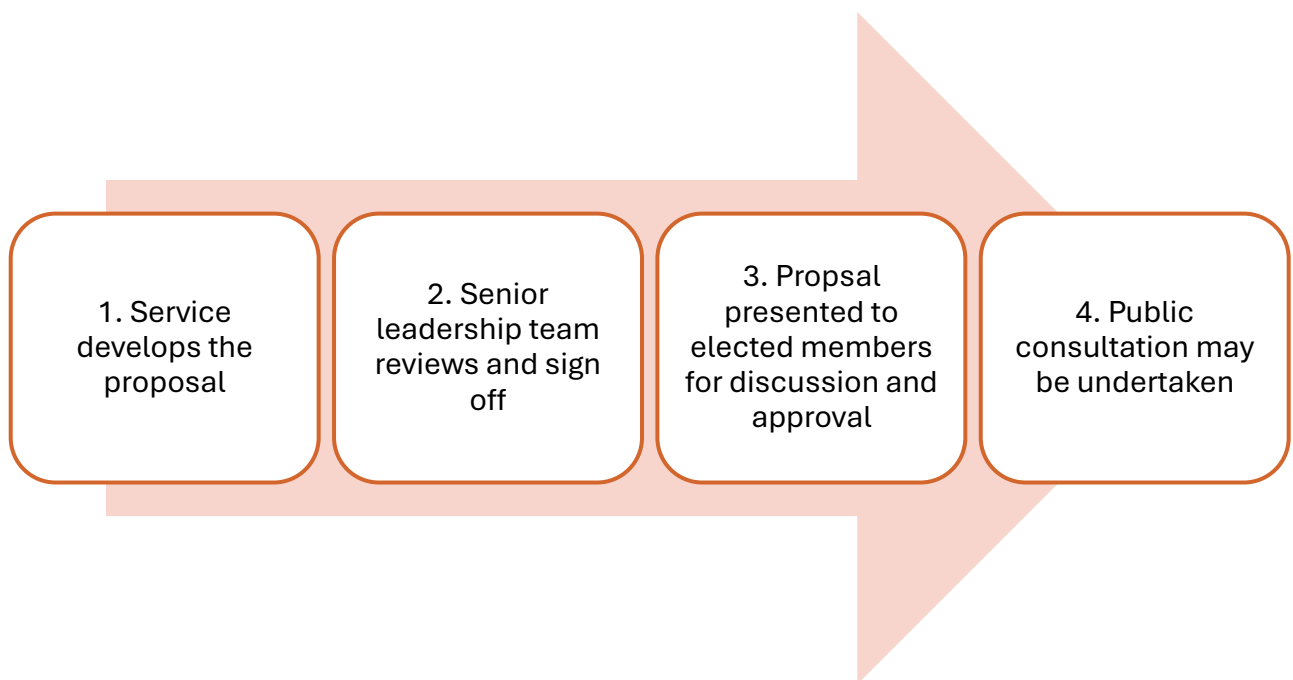


The Fostering Network council tax exemptions implementation help sheet

The Fostering Network believes that all foster carers should be exempt from paying council tax, as this is a practical and meaningful way to recognise the vital role they play. Currently, around 25% of local authorities in England offer this exemption, and we know many others are keen to follow but are finding the process challenging. To support this, we have spoken with local authorities that have successfully implemented the policy and have produced this help sheet to assist you in developing your own proposal.

Overview of process



What to include in the proposal

1. Reasons for implementing

- Retention of foster carers through increase in recognition from local authority and valued for giving a loving home to children and young people in care
- Recruitment of foster carers through increased financial recognition and word of mouth from values foster carers
- It is uniquely within the council's authority to provide this financial relief

- Ultimately leading to more children and young people living locally with the right support
- The Department for Education gives council tax as an example of a wider incentive fostering services should provide in the new [draft standards for fostering](#). It states in Part 4: Guidance for Fostering Services, Chapter 3.9 - *“Fostering services should review the financial support they offer annually, including allowances, expenses, wider incentives (such as council tax discounts or exemptions) and the fees they pay to foster carers.”*

2. Financial information to include – invest to save

- The number of children under the local authorities care that are currently in residential care that would receive better care in foster care
- Average residential care cost
- Comparison of average foster care placement and how much would be saved
- Comparison with cost of some IFA placements
- Number of foster carers and the maximum it would cost the council
- Number of foster carers you are aiming to recruit

3. Criteria to consider

- Would the exemption be for all foster carers (including kinship, short break)
- Would it be for all foster carers living inside and outside council boundary
- Would foster carers have to foster for a certain number of days before receiving the exemption

4. How will the exemption be received

- Option: Collaborate with the council tax team and notify them when there is a new carer so they can be issued with a new council tax bill with the exemption
- Option: Reimbursed to the foster carers monthly or in a lump sum once criteria met

5. Examples of success

- **Plymouth Council** - enhanced its support for foster carers by including council tax exemptions in its new offer. They found this increased the overall financial support for foster carers who chose to foster with them, aiding retention.
- **Liverpool City Council** - saw eight foster carers move from independent fostering agencies to in-house fostering services, almost hitting their target of recruiting ten additional foster carers within the first year of the exemption being introduced. They also reported the exemption had a positive impact on morale, helping carers feel more valued in their vital role.
- **Greenwich Council** experienced a spike in enquiries following a targeted campaign that highlighted council tax exemptions for their foster carers.

6. Analysis of benefits and risk

- Unique selling point
- Foster carers will feel valued and rewarded with morale boost
- Increase word of mouth recruitment – which is the most effective recruitment technique
- Retention of foster carers will improve

- Reduction in number of children places at a distance, keeping links with family and support network
- Cost avoidance with residential care
- Some *households* will already receive a discount so cost to the Local Authority will be less than maximum figure stated
- Positive publicity
- Invest to save initially
- Complaints for carers who do not meet the criteria

Tips from other local authorities

- **Align the proposal with the local authorities' wider strategic priorities** to strengthen the case
- **Articulate the benefits for children's services and the wider council**
- **Build strong relationships with key decision makers** – particularly the Director of Children's Services and elected officials who can champion the proposal
- **Engage with nearby local authorities that have already implemented the policy** – learn from their process, business case, challenges and solution
- **Review the entire foster carer support offer** – and consider incorporating council tax exemptions as part of an enhanced package, which is aligned with a target recruitment campaign
- **Link the proposal with your sufficiency strategy** – showing how exemptions support placement stability and reduce residential placements
- **Collaborate with neighbouring authorities in your recruitment hub or planned regional care cooperative** – to harmonise offers, avoid competition between councils, and strengthen regional sufficiency

Examples of successful proposals

- [Plymouth](#)
- [North East Lincolnshire](#)
- [Herefordshire](#) – [council meeting recording](#)