

## **Motion to Council—*Request for Council to correct an equality injustice suffered by employees who missed out on Welsh Government's Financial Recognition Scheme.***

This Council recognises and recompenses the hard work and dedication of employees from ***Workforce Development, Early Years Childcare and Play, Families First, and Flying Start***, who are all part of the Social Services Directorate. These staff members did not receive payment from Welsh Government's NHS and Social Care Financial Recognition Scheme despite carrying out the same duties throughout the Covid 19 pandemic as their colleagues in the Health and Social Care sectors, who have benefitted from the scheme.

Council notes:

1. There was a profound injustice in this situation; Initial guidance in April 2021 stated that all employees under the Director of Social Services were included. Two weeks later, the direction was changed, resulting in staff from the areas above losing the payment.
2. Our employees were actively on the front line at the very onset of Covid 19 and have continued to support the most vulnerable children and families in Blaenau Gwent. Flying Start Childcare staff have kept all Flying Start childcare settings open in the County. These settings were repurposed to take children of critical workers and our most vulnerable children so that keyworkers could continue to work for the NHS etc.
3. While schools were closed and school-age children were taught from home, our staff opened their childcare settings and went to work every day through lockdown, putting themselves and their families in the path of the unknown.
4. Our Family Support Workers have continued face to face contacts throughout the pandemic while some of their Health Colleagues from the same teams, who received the payment, worked from home and carried out virtual visits.
5. Our staff delivered food parcels, children's activity parcels, heating and lighting tokens etc. They did welfare checks on the doorstep and visits to the parks in the open air to keep families safe and stop their needs from escalating into crisis. At the same time, some higher-paid colleagues worked from home utilising telephone and video calls.
6. Many of the staff in this sector are amongst the lowest-paid employees in the Authority starting from a scale 3 grade; this payment would significantly benefit them in difficult times. On hearing the news of the scheme, one employee was heard to say, "*it's like winning the lottery; I can take my children for a weekend away after all this*". Two weeks later, the rules changed, and the employee was no longer eligible for the payment.
7. The one-off payment is £735 per person for approximately 100 members, around £73,500 in total. During the past four years, the Council has enjoyed the most positive increase in RSG in decades, including an 8.4% rise this year; we have the financial means to right this wrong.

### **Therefore, this Council resolves:**

To recognise the dedication and hard work of our employees from ***Workforce Development, Early Years, Childcare and Play, Families First and Flying Start*** and to put right the injustice suffered by them by paying each member a one-off payment of £735 from the Council's Corporate Budget.

Signed: Cllr S C Thomas, Cllr P Edwards, Cllr H Trollope, Cllr J Millard, Cllr P Baldwin.