



## **Call for evidence on parental leave and pay review: The Fostering Network's response**

**August 2025**

**Question 6:** Are there further or other objectives that you would like to see included as part of the parental leave and pay review? (Yes or No)

**Yes**

**Question 6b:** Please list and briefly explain each one, including providing links to any relevant evidence.

### ***Five days statutory paid leave for foster carers***

Foster carers play a vital role in society, offering a stable, loving home to some of the most vulnerable children and young people. Acting in a parental capacity on behalf of the state, they provide 24 hour care, 7 days a week, providing the children in their care security, emotional support and consistency. It is well evidenced that for many children and young people in care, foster care is usually the most appropriate option rather than residential care. It provides a nurturing family environment where trusted long term relationships can develop and has the best long term outcomes and stability for children and young people. Foster care ensures children are cared for in non-residential settings, in a family environment and compared to residential care is a more cost-effective option. More than three quarters of children requiring care across the UK are cared for as part of a fostering family where they are unable to remain with their birth family.

According to our recent [State of the Nations](#) (SotN) Survey which included responses from more than 3,000 foster carers, 40% of foster carers work alongside their fostering role. Fourteen percent of those reported being in full-time employment. Working alongside fostering is often a personal choice but our findings indicate many do it to supplement the income they receive for fostering. Some respondents reported they choose to continue working for their own professional fulfilment and progression. It is also the case that in a fostering household with two carers, one partner may work while the other partner is the primary carer. Our data shows that those who foster with their partner or another adult are more likely to work alongside fostering (42%) than those who foster on their own (36%).

The Fostering Network recently tabled an amendment to the Employment Rights Bill during the House of Lords committee stage, to propose including provision for foster carer leave to the bill. The Minister, Lord Katz's response acknowledged the foster carers' role but he responded he could not commit to new leave entitlements without further assessment. This call for evidence is an opportunity to carry out such an assessment into a new leave entitlement for foster carers. We note the call for evidence recognises the role of kinship carers who provide similar care to their extended families and

close networks, and we therefore consider that the role of non-kinship foster carers should also be recognised.

The Fostering Network proposes all foster carers in paid employment outside of their fostering role, including those going through the approval process, should be entitled to five days statutory paid leave to support their fostering commitments. This would greatly support foster carers to remain in employment while fulfilling essential duties such as attending appointments to support the children in their care e.g. CAHMS appointments or looked after children reviews, travelling to family time with birth parents, completing mandatory training or helping to settle a new child into their home. Children in care often have additional needs requiring foster carers to take them to medical or other appointments, as well as managing the appointments and reviews that come with being in the care system. Recognising these commitments through paid leave, in the same way that flexible leave is being explored for parents in this consultation, is a vital step towards showing support for the invaluable role foster carers have. It shows foster carers they are valued while providing practical arrangements to underpin the stability of foster placements by supporting foster carers to supplement their income so they are less likely to cease fostering for financial reasons.

Concerningly, our recent SotN survey found that 60% of foster carers who responded said they had either considered or were still considering resigning from fostering which is a factor in the current retention crisis. The survey also found that over a quarter (27%) of foster carers, who had considered resigning, said financial difficulties contributed to this. Only one in three foster carers said their allowance and expenses met the full cost of looking after the children they foster. Only one quarter said they felt their fee was sufficient to cover their essential living costs, including bills, rent or mortgage, and food.

Therefore, it is important that foster carers can choose to keep working, and gain extra income allowing them to continue fostering. We estimate that 6,500 more foster carers are needed across the UK to keep pace with the level of need where the numbers of children coming into care has continues to increase over the past decade. Introducing five days statutory paid leave for employees who foster to meet their fostering commitments would enable more people to combine fostering with work, helping retain experienced foster carers and attract new ones.

In 2014 The Fostering Network, in partnership with the Department for Education, published a report on [Combing Fostering and Other Work](#). The report found that while some foster carers praised their employers for having sympathetic line managers, most felt unsupported and often had to use annual leave to attend training and meetings. When asked what would help foster carers to work and foster, 60% of the 703 foster carers responding highlighted factors which they considered would improve their situation which included the introduction of foster care friendly HR policies would be beneficial, with 55% suggesting paid time off for training, 46% for settling a child into a new placement and 44% said flexible working would be invaluable.

In summary, foster carers need more flexibility and understanding from employers and these should be codified in HR policies to support employees who foster.

As a response to this report, The Fostering Network established 'the [Fostering Friendly Employers](#) scheme which helps employers support and recognise the roles of their employees who foster by giving them five days paid leave and flexible working. In February 2025, 210 organisations from across the public and private sector had signed up to the scheme accounting for over 700,000 employees. Fostering Friendly Employers now includes the Department for Education, the Scottish Government, John Lewis, KPMG, Nationwide, Metro Bank, B&Q and Manchester City Council. These organisations represent a variety of sectors including education, health and social care, manufacturing, finance and professional services, sport and food and retail.

One Fostering Friendly employer stated *“the impact on the company is relatively small, but the impact for any potential child being fostered could be significant”*.

Introducing a statutory entitlement to five days paid leave for foster carers to carry out their fostering commitments would significantly support retention in the sector. It would ensure that [foster](#) carers are not forced to choose between their work and caring responsibilities. It would also signal that the government recognises and values the important work they do for children and young people.

We urge the Government to introduce five days statutory paid leave into legislation to ensure all foster carers, no matter where they work, can benefit from this flexibility.

Below are examples of the Fostering Friendly policy that employers can use and more information about the scheme.

[Fostering Friendly policy sample](#)

[Fostering Friendly brochure](#)