



Health and Social Care Committee Consultation

The Fostering Network's Response

September 2026

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of children and young people who are fostered to make foster care the best it can be. As a membership body, The Fostering Network's views are shaped through our projects and programmes as well as our members' participation in advisory boards and forums. We have 4,364 foster carer members in Wales and all 22 local authorities plus 7 independent fostering agencies.

The number of foster carers across Wales has been falling since 2021, while the number of children coming into care remains high. Although the rate of decline has slowed in recent years, the system remains under significant strain. New data we published recently during our Foster Care Fortnight campaign shows that 400 additional foster carers in Wales are required to give children the safe, stable, and loving homes they need. This is despite significant investment in recruitment from the previous Welsh Government, showing that much more needs to be done to retain current foster carers.

Allowances and fees for foster carers:

Each government of the UK sets national minimum allowances (NMAs) for foster carers according to the age and needs of a child. Paying in line with the government's NMAs is not statutory, and while providers are expected to pay the minimum allowance, rates of allowances for foster carers in Wales differ across each local authority.

Although the Government has announced uplifts to the allowance, it has not sufficiently raised the NMA in line with actual inflation for the past three years compared to England. Scotland recently included a legal requirement to uprate allowances annually in the Promise Act.

There needs to be significant investment in fostering allowances to ensure they cover the full costs of caring for a child, these should be in line with our recommended rates which we have calculated with economists on the true cost of caring for a child in foster care.¹ We would like to see a statutory uprating duty introduced as in Scotland, the introduction of an allowance for post 18 arrangements and national monitoring to ensure compliance with the NMA.

The amount of fee payments (or skills payments) that foster carers receive on top of the allowance depends on the fostering service. However, there is no requirement for fostering services to offer fee payments, and each fostering service will have their own policy about them.

The previous Welsh Government held a consultation to make changes to the Part 6 Code of Practice which set out that all local authorities must pay the NMA, but we believe there was a missed opportunity to harmonise both allowances and fees in line with our recommended rates.

National Register for foster carers:

The previous Welsh Government accepted in part the recommendation of a national register for foster carers following the Radical Reform Inquiry in 2023. In their response to the recommendation, Welsh Government accepted that a national register would improve the status of foster carers, address the difficulty foster carers experience when moving from one service to another and would offer a robust safeguarding mechanism. The financial implications and complexity of introducing a national register were mentioned as barriers to implementation.

Following this, the previous Government opened a consultation on changes to fostering which included scoping a potential national register for foster carers.² 81% of foster carers said they would support the introduction of a register in response to our members survey. Since then, Welsh Government responded that they would continue to explore the feasibility, purpose, and potential models for improving information-sharing and

¹ [Foster Care Allowances | Financial Support for Carers | The Fostering Network](#)

² [Our response to the Welsh Government consultation on improving fostering services 2025](#)

support across the fostering community. However, there has been no further update or information on a national register for foster carers.

Scotland have introduced a pilot for a register in their Promise Act, and we would like to see Wales do the same. We believe a national register would improve the status of foster carers, as currently they are caring for babies, children and young people 24 hours a day, 7 days week but are the only person in the team around the child who provide formal care for children who do not have to be registered with a central body.

A national register would greatly improve the collection of national data about the number of available foster carers in each local authority which would help improve matching and information sharing which could help reduce placement breakdown, improving stability and ensure more children remain closer to their families, communities, schools and support networks. It could also reduce the need for out-of-area placements and reduce the number of foster carers with vacant placements.

Also, it could improve safeguarding measures as it would provide a clearer record of a foster carer's approval history and help ensure consistent information is available as to whether someone has previously been de-registered for safeguarding reasons.

In addition, it could support foster carer portability by enabling carers to transfer more smoothly and efficiently between fostering services if they need to change service or move location.