

The National Fostering Framework Wales

Foster care allowances and payments survey 2016-17

A report by The Fostering Network Wales

March 2017

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Foreword

We know that good foster care makes a real difference to children and young people's lives.

Foster carers provide children with stability, security, attachment and often their first positive experience of family life. However, the current system in Wales does not always consistently support foster carers to do this.

For decades, fostering has benefited from a dedicated, committed and expert workforce of foster carers, who spend their days and years helping fostered children transform their lives. Yet this report reveals that whilst all foster carers receive an allowance to cover the costs of fostering, not all get an additional fee in recognition of their time, skills and experience. This report has revealed that both fees and allowances vary widely across Wales.

The Fostering Network firmly believes that fostering services should seek to ensure that all foster carers in Wales are fairly compensated for the expenses incurred in caring for a child in their home and rewarded for their unique skills, experience and capabilities. Through the work of the National Fostering Framework, we are pleased that work is ongoing to address this important issue.

It is essential that investment is made in the futures of all looked after children and young people, in order to promote positive outcomes for them.

Colin Turner

Director

The Fostering Network Wales

1. Introduction

1.1 About The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are passionate about the difference foster care makes to children and young people. Transforming fostered children's lives is at the heart of everything we do.

We are the essential network for foster care, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children, inspiring, motivating and supporting them, to make foster care better. Together, we're a powerful catalyst for change, influencing and shaping fostering policy and practice at every level.

We work to ensure all fostered children have a positive experience of family life, supporting them to have high aspirations, to overcome the challenges of their early lives and to achieve their very best.

We help foster carers to improve children's lives. We champion the vital role they and their families play in helping fostered children, and work to ensure they are properly recognised, valued and supported. For more information visit www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

1.2 Background

Fees and allowances across the UK

Fees and allowances are set at local level and vary widely across the UK, and according to the age and needs of a child, but in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, foster carers should receive at least the national recommended rates as set by local governments. Scotland does not currently have recommended minimum allowances for foster carers, although the Scottish Government has committed to making national recommendations in the near future.

Foster carers' views

Data relating to foster carer payments have been highlighted by Beecham and Sinclair (2007), drawing on a study by Kirton, Beecham and Ogilvie (2003). They note that very few foster carers were 'in it for the money' but that nevertheless they often relied on their fostering income.¹

¹ Beecham, J and Sinclair, I. 2006. *Costs and Outcomes in Children's Social Care: Messages from Research (Costs & Effectiveness of Services Children in Need)*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

In 2016, The Fostering Network consulted widely with foster carers in Wales about the fees and allowances paid to them. It found that issues around payments and finance were a significant challenge to foster carers, practice varied across different areas, and some foster carers did not know what financial support they were entitled to.

These findings were echoed in The Fostering Network's State of the Nation 2016 report (bit.ly/stateofthenations), which represented the views of foster carers throughout the UK. The report highlighted that issues surrounding the financial support that foster carers received was one of the three top issues that foster carers would choose to change, in order to help them improve the lives and outcomes of the children and young people for whom they care. The report found that only 42 per cent of foster carers felt their allowance covered the full cost of looking after fostered children. This means that more than half of all foster carers in the UK have to rely on other sources of income, or their savings, to cover the cost of looking after the child.

In respect of fees paid to for the foster carers' time and skills, the report found that 56 per cent of foster carers said their household income was reliant on the money they receive from fostering.

When foster carers were asked about the one thing they would like to see changed, in order to improve the lives of the children they care for, a common theme was the need for proper financial support, to enable them to focus on caring for children and not worry about their financial situation. Some spoke of feeling pressurised to take part-time jobs, when the needs of the children were such that they felt they should be at home. In addition to adequate allowances and fees, foster carers raised the issue of retainers, holiday pay, sick leave and pensions. Others cited the challenges of not receiving an income, when they encountered periods without children being placed with them and when retainer payments were not made.

This State of the Nation 2016 report further highlighted that a third of foster carers in the UK had other paid work in addition to fostering to supplement their fostering income, a statistic that has remained consistent since The Fostering Network's previous large scale survey in 2014. This is indicative that, for many foster carers, the time and commitment required to foster effectively, precludes additional paid work for at least one adult in the fostering household, that foster carers have been discouraged by the fostering service to seek supplementary employment, or that the foster carers have chosen not to have other paid work because their fostering

income, combined with other sources of income, are sufficient to allow them to stay at home.

It has become evident that as many foster carers are being encouraged to develop specialist skills and knowledge, to improve their competence and confidence to look after children with complex and challenging needs, the issue of fee payments is becoming a more pressing issue, particularly as fostering is rightly being recognised as a professional activity.

2. About this report

The National Fostering Framework (NFF) Phase One Report 2015-16 (<http://bit.ly/NFFreport>) contained a number of recommendations following an extensive consultation programme with all key stakeholders, including foster carers throughout Wales.

During the consultation programme, foster carers and local authority staff identified that the issue of payments to foster carers, in terms of fees and allowances, was potentially a crucial component that needed to be addressed, particularly in relation to its impact on recruitment and retention of foster carers. This is now considered particularly important within the context of there being a national shortage of approved foster carers leading to a reliance/dependence on foster carers within the independent sector. Consequently, the need for greater consistency and transparency, in terms of fees and allowances, is seen as a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed.

The NFF Phase One report contained a number of recommendations for improving foster care in Wales, including **Recommendation 9: *Harmonise policies for paying fees and allowances to local authority foster carers.***

It was considered that harmonising fees and allowances would improve outcomes for children and young people, by ensuring that all foster carers are able to provide good quality care for children and young people. It would also improve outcomes for foster carers by creating consistency, equality and transparency.

In light of the above recommendation, it was clear that a mapping exercise was required to establish the current situation in respect of fees and allowance across Wales. The Fostering Network was subsequently commissioned to undertake this work and report on its findings, as part of the work programme for Phase Two.

The Fostering Network was specifically commissioned to:

- Undertake a survey of all Welsh authorities' foster carer payment structures, and the methodology behind them.
- Map out the fees/allowances/additional payments paid by each local authority to its foster carers in this financial year (2016/17).

The Fostering Network were considered to be well placed to take the lead role in this work given their UK wide brief and their annual survey of local authority foster carer allowances.

2.1. Report structure

This report details the findings of a 2016 survey of all 22 local authority fostering services in Wales. Each fostering service received a form to complete, designed to elicit the following information:

- The full breakdown of fostering allowances (to be spent on the child), including expenses.
- The current fee structure (i.e. payments for the foster carer's time and skills), including numbers of foster carers on each band.
- The payments for When I am Ready arrangements, where looked after young people remain living with their former foster carers after their 18th birthday.

Initially, completed forms were only received from six local authorities in fostering services. However, local authorities who did not respond were issued with a Freedom of Information request for the basic information, with more detailed data on expenses researched by telephone and open source, web-based research.

This report is divided into four sections.

- Section 1** Provides a detailed overview that summarises local authority allowances and fee structures.
- Section 2** Collates allowances information. Here, allowances are compared with previous years and the Welsh Government recommended minimum allowances. It also considers bespoke additional expenses payments to foster carers, such as mileage.
- Section 3** Sets out a number of possible scenarios for foster carers, and compares what their household income might be if they were fostering for a different fostering service with alternative fees and allowances.
- Section 4** Provides a Wales-wide comparison of When I am Ready allowances for care leavers who remain living with their former foster carers under the provisions of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

3. Fees and allowances

3.1. What are fees?

Fee payments are generally made on top of allowances, to recognise a foster carers' time, skills, competence, qualifications and experience.

While all foster carers receive an allowance, there is no specified requirement for fee payments to be made. Currently only around 57 per cent of foster carers in the UK receive a fee or 'reward' element for the work that they do for caring for children [State of the Nation 2016]. Where they do, the fees vary considerably.

Usually fee-paid foster carers receive payment only when they have a child in placement. Fee payments are generally made on top of allowances, to recognise a foster carer's time, skills and experience.

The Fostering Network's State of the Nation's Foster Care survey 2016 bit.ly/stateofthenations found that only roughly half of foster carers receive fees, a pattern which has remained consistent over many years. Of those who do receive fee payments, the fee levels are considered unsatisfactory by many foster carers. The Fostering Network strongly advocates that foster carers should be paid an appropriate and realistic fee for the vital job that they do. (Ref: The Fostering Network policy on pay for foster carers - bit.ly/PayPolicy)

3.2. What are allowances?

All approved foster carers receive a weekly fostering allowance, which is designed to cover the cost of caring for a fostered child. It is intended to cover food, clothes, toiletries and all other expenses incurred in looking after a fostered child.

If a kinship carer (also known as 'friends and family') is an approved foster carer, they will also receive the foster carer allowances. However, the fees and allowances paid to kinship carers are not always the same as those paid to mainstream foster carers, and in some cases are significantly lower.

Minimum recommended allowances published annually by the Welsh Government and are based according to the specific needs and age of the child. Foster carers should receive at least the national recommended minimum rates or above. However, each local authority in Wales is left with the discretion as whether it pays more or less than the minimum recommended allowances. This report demonstrates allowance payments vary widely across Wales.

Each year The Fostering Network reviews the allowances paid by all local authorities in Wales to their foster carers, to establish if they are meeting the Welsh Government's national minimum levels. Where they are not, The Fostering Network campaigns for allowances to be brought up to these levels. Having been successful in this regard, there are now only a very small minority of fostering services in Wales that pay below the minimum recommended allowances.

Section 1: Overview

This section outlines each of the 22 local authority fostering services current payments to foster carers.

Where information was available, the number of foster carers on each pay band is also included. This is particularly important as it demonstrates what proportions of foster carers genuinely receive a fee, in addition to their allowance. Unless stated otherwise - all payments are weekly.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all payments are weekly.

Blaenau Gwent

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £177.38 £215.74
Additional payments	Mileage Festival allowance Birthday / holiday allowance	£0.45/mile when over 35 miles per week £100.00 per family at Christmas None paid
Fees	Band 1 - £25.00 Band 2 - £75.00 Band 3 - £125.00 “Unfortunately we are unable to provide how many foster carers are on each band as the information isn’t all recorded at present, so we are unable to confirm the figures as requested.”	
When I Am Ready 18+	£215.74. Same for each year.	

Bridgend

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £177.38 £224.37
Additional payments	Mileage Emergency Clothing Grant 0 – 4 5 – 10 11 – 15 16+ Costs over and above the set rate will be reimbursed providing receipts are available, up to a maximum of £174.00 for 0-4 year olds, £217.00 for 5-10 year olds, £235.00 for 11-15 year olds and £250.00 for 16+ Emergency School Clothing Grants 5 – 10 11 – 15 16+ Costs over and above the set rates will be reimbursed provided receipts are available, up to a maximum of £92.00 for 5-10 year olds and £121.00 for 11+ and 16+	£0.47 / mile £87.00 £109.00 £135.00 £154.00 £46.00 £60.50 £60.50
Fees	Band 1 - £25.00 (35 foster carers) Band 2 - £75.00 (six foster carers) Band 3 - £125.00 (67 foster carers)	
When I Am Ready 18+	£215.74. Same for each year.	

Caerphilly

Basic allowances	0-4 5-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £189.00
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	£0.522 / mile Part of allowances, no extra paid
Fees	Mainstream Career The weekly fee for the foster carer is paid per child in placement. However, if you are approved for more than one child, but had no children placed with you at a particular time, you will only receive one fee payment.	£68.41 (39 foster carers) £176.73 (42 foster carers) For example: Mainstream foster carer approved for 2 children aged between 5 and 15 with no children in placement = 1 x mainstream fee of £68.41 Mainstream foster carer approved for two children aged between five and 15 with 2 children in placement = 2 x mainstream fee of £68.41 = £136.82 PLUS 2 x weekly allowance of £139.00 = £278.00. Total £414.82
When I Am Ready 18+	The former foster carer receives £189.00 per week for those young people NEET; £287.83pw for those in education	

	<p>employment or training. The young person is expected to contribute £20.00 per week, and this is deducted from the former foster carer's payment.</p>
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Cardiff

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £177.38 £224.37
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	£0.45 per mile Same as one weekly allowance Double weekly allowance Variable
Fees	Band 1 Band 2 Band 3	£0 (33 foster carers) £64.86 (27 foster carers) £175.83 (61 foster carers) Plus 8 "back up foster carers"
When I Am Ready 18+	£189.00 per week for years 1,2 and 3	

Carmarthenshire

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£170.00 £160.00 £170.00 £190.00
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Initial clothing allowances School uniform allowance Equipment	£0.371 per mile 0-4 £50.00, 5-10 £75.00, 11-15 £100.00, 16+ £150.00 0-4 £75.00, 5-10 £100.00, 11-15 £150.00, 16+£150.00 0-4 £75.00, 5-10 £200.00, 11-15 £300.00, 16+£400.00 £80.00 to £125.00 Primary £75.00 Secondary £170.00 Based on needs assessment
Fees	‘Payment for skills & experience’ 0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£35.00 per child £45.00 £60.00 £60.00 Numbers of foster carers unknown

Ceredigion

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £177.38 £215.74
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	Over 10 miles: £0.469 /mile One week's allowance each One week's allowance As and when appropriate.
Fees	0-4 5-10 11-15 16-18 Core training allowance NVQ Level 3 / (QCF) Continuous Service Allowance: 5 years 10 years 15 years 20 years Numbers of foster carers on each band: 0-4 £176.00 0-4 £186.00 0-4 £221.00 0-4 £271.00 0-4 £281.00 5-10 £171.00 5-10 £216.00 5-10 £266.00 5-10 £276.00 5-10 £271.00 11-15 £252.38 11-15 £207.38 11-15 £277.38 11-15 £217.38 11-15 £312.38 11-15 £327.38 11-15 £302.38 16-18 £255.74 16-18 £350.74 16-18 £360.74 16-18 £300.74 16-18 £365.74	£10.00 £20.00 £30.00 £40.00 £45.00 £50.00 £10.00 £15.00 £20.00 £25.00 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 2 1 2 3 2 1 1 2 2 3 3 1 1 2 3 3 1 1 2

When I Am Ready 18+	The WIR payments currently are a continuation of the fostering allowance at 18 years (£224.37) for all years, and they are in the process of finalising a specific WIR allowance.
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Conwy

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £182.00 £189.00
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	Comes out of allowances Information not supplied
Fees	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Foster carers	£0 (21 foster carers) £146.00 (one foster carer) 1 Child £234.62 (52 foster carers) 2 Child £275.42 3 Child £326.43
When I Am Ready 18+	£189.00 per week	

Denbighshire

Basic allowances	0-4 5-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £189.00			
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday 0-4 5-10 11-15 16+ Festival 0-4 5-10 11-15 16+ Holiday 0-4 5-10 11-15 16+ Equipment	£0.409 per mile £54.00 £81.00 £108.00 £135.00 £54.00 £81.00 £108.00 £135.00 £100.00 £160.00 £160.00 £200.00			
Fees	Primary level Tier 1 Tier 2 Tier 3 Number of foster carers unknown	One child £0 £79.75 £132.91 £186.07	Two £0 £106.32 £186.07 £265.82	Three £0 £132.91 £239.24 £345.56	Four £0 £159.49 £292.39 £425.31
When I Am Ready 18+	£189.00 per week				

Flintshire

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £179.15 £217.90
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	Out of allowance £151.00 - £217.00 x 2 £302.00 - £435.000 As and when
Fees	Tier / # of children 1/ 1 1 /2 1 /3 1 /4 2 /1 2 /2 2 /3 2 /4 3 /1 3 /2 3 /3 3 /4 4 /1 4 /2 4 /3 4 /4	£0.00 (63 foster carers) £0.00 £0.00 £0.00 £65.00 (14 foster carers) £65.00 £81.25 £97.50 £125.00 (15 foster carers) £125.00 £156.25 £187.50 £230.00 (three foster carers) £230.00 £287.50 £345.00
When I Am Ready 18+	£189.00 a week	

Gwynedd

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £181.81 £221.13
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	0.45/mile ½ week each £205.00 As and when
Fees	1 st 12 months Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 + £50.00 for each child over 13.	£0 (45 foster carers) £100.00 (18 foster carers) £150.00 (22 foster carers) £200.00 (17 foster carers) + £50.00 for each child over 13
When I Am Ready 18+	The weekly allowance to former foster carer where there is a young person 18+ in the arrangement is £189.00 (if eligible housing benefit and a proportion of the young person's income is deducted from this amount). The maximum allowance remains the same for all years.	

Isle of Anglesey

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £181.81 £221.13
Additional payments	Mileage, only: - medical/optical/dental appointments - departmental meetings - to facilitate contact with the child/young person and the natural family - travel between home and placement – where transport cannot reasonably be provided by parents - in extraordinary and exceptional circumstances travelling to and from school may be paid as an emergency measure - Tros Gynnal or group work for looked after children - work experience. Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance	Flat rate at the appropriate local authority car user rate. 1 week's allowance each 2 week's allowance
Fees	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5	£0 (13 foster carers) £75.75 per week per placement (13 foster carers) £126.25 per week per placement (4 foster carers) £151.50 per week per placement (9 foster carers) £202.00 per week per placement (2 foster carers)
When I Am Ready 18+	£189.00	

Merthyr Tydfil

Basic allowances	0-10 11-18	£159.00 £182.00
Additional payments	<p>Mileage if over 20 miles/day £0.40/mile</p> <p>Holiday and Christmas 0-10yrs £306.00 11-18yr £353.20</p> <p>Birthday 0-10yrs £153.00 11-18yrs £176.60</p> <p>Equipment is provided as required- safety equipment, bedroom furniture, baby equipment and emergency clothing grants.</p> <p>Merthyr Tydfil BC also pay a permanency bonus of £306.00 for 0-10yr olds and £353.00 for 11-18yr olds if no respite is taken, this then reduces pro rata up to a maximum of 14 days respite being taken.</p>	
Fees	<p>Band 1 foster carers (kinship only)</p> <p>Band 2 foster carers</p> <p>Band 3 foster carers</p>	<p>£0 (10 foster carers) £65.00 per child (29 foster carers) £160.00 per child (17 foster carers)</p> <p>Approved kinship foster carers do not receive fees.</p>
When I Am Ready 18+	£140.00 per week	
Comments	No changes envisaged this year and our current allowance structure is being put on hold until we come into line with the Welsh government advised pay structures, as currently we are paying more than the advised rates for all children, other than the over 16 years.	

Monmouthshire

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £152.55 £197.61
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	£0.45 / mile One week's allowance each Two week's allowance Reimbursed
Fees	Basic Level 1 Level 2 Level 3	£0 (13 carers) £50.00 per child (eight carers) £60.00 per child (nine carers) £75.00 per child (two carers) These figures are inclusive of all foster carers, including kinship foster carers. In addition to the above, there are three short break foster carers who provide respite/short breaks service only and do not receive a fee.
When I Am Ready 18+	Currently three children in When I Am Ready and continuing care placements, for which they top-up any housing benefit to the value of £140.00 per week allowance. In addition, young people are expected to contribute £20.00 per week from their income to the foster carer, making a total of £160.00 per week.	

Neath Port Talbot

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£162.12 £146.57 £145.48 £183.19																																					
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday allowance 0-4 5-10 11-15 16-17 Festival 0-4 5-10 11-15 16-17 Holiday allowance 0-4 5-10 11-15 16-17 Equipment	£0.45/mile £101.22 £115.29 £143.57 £183.19 £201.22 £215.29 £243.57 £283.19 £202.44 £230.58 £287.14 £366.38 As and when																																					
Fees	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Band</th> <th>Weekly Fee</th> <th></th> <th>No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Band A</td> <td>0</td> <td>Family & friends foster carers</td> <td>38</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band B</td> <td>127.50</td> <td>Age 0-10 standard</td> <td>32</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band C</td> <td>143.00</td> <td>Age 0-10 with NVQ Diploma</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band D</td> <td>177.50</td> <td>Age 11 plus standard</td> <td>19</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band E</td> <td>193.00</td> <td>Age 11 plus with NVQ Diploma</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band F</td> <td>260.00</td> <td>Complex/PACT</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Foster carers that fit into more than one category</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Total</td> <td>135</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Band	Weekly Fee		No	Band A	0	Family & friends foster carers	38	Band B	127.50	Age 0-10 standard	32	Band C	143.00	Age 0-10 with NVQ Diploma	14	Band D	177.50	Age 11 plus standard	19	Band E	193.00	Age 11 plus with NVQ Diploma	13	Band F	260.00	Complex/PACT	2			Foster carers that fit into more than one category	17			Total	135
Band	Weekly Fee		No																																				
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		Foster carers that fit into more than one category	17																																				
		Total	135																																				
When I Am Ready 18+	Housing benefit element £80.00 approx. Young person's contribution for board & Lodge £15.00 Payment for practical and emotional support £109.00 Total weekly payment £204.00.																																						

Newport

Basic allowances	0-4 5-15 16+	£159.00 £145.00 £182.00
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance	£0.45 / mile None paid
Fees	0-4 5-10 11-15 16-18 Additional payments Core foster carers Career foster carers Specialist foster carers	£50.00 per child £75.00 £150.00 £150.00 £0 (133 foster carers) £100.00 (16 foster carers) £300.00 (Nine foster carers)
When I Am Ready 18+	Four foster carers with a WIR arrangement who receive £107.40 a week.	

Pembrokeshire

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £151.00 £177.38 £215.42
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	£0.33 / mile One additional weeks allowance for birthday and Christmas at the standard rate. Two additional weeks allowance – these are annual one off payments Equipment as and when needed
Fees	Core Training Availability (discretionary) NVQ	£48.93 per child £32.48 £54.28 per child
When I Am Ready 18+	£201.00 per week less housing benefit	

Powys

Basic allowances	0-18	£232.34
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	Mileage (over 240 miles per week) @ £0.45/mile Not paid Not paid Not paid
Fees	An additional skills allowance paid to foster carers who are caring for a child not previously known to them. Additional needs payment If providing a placement for one parent and their baby, an allowance of £591.09 per week is paid, and where foster carers are providing a placement to a child and both parents, this allowance is presently £708.75 per week.	£126.41 per child (50 foster carers) £250.00 (5 foster carers)
When I Am Ready 18+	None in WIR placements in Powys	
Comments from service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would be good if all LAs were able to pay the same amount, but ensuring it is an adequate level of payment. I would be concerned if our allowances reduced as a result of a national approach. - We are looking to implement a peer mentoring scheme, so there will be some additional responsibilities for some foster carers who act as mentors and this would need to be reflected in the fc agreement. - 	

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Basic allowances	0-4 5-15 16+	£166 £151 £189
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance	Over 20 miles per day: £0.45/mile None paid
Fees	Mainstream foster carer Probationary foster carer Kinship foster carer	£166.50 per child (114 foster carers) £111.00 per child (six foster carers) £0 (88 foster carers)
When I Am Ready 18+	<p>Year 1. Foster carers will receive the same amount as they previously received whilst the YP is still in Education or Training minus any benefits the YP is eligible to claim. We are unable to give specific amounts as foster carers will all be paid at different rates depending on whether they are internal or external. This amount then reduces to £170.00 per week after the education or training has ceased or will start at £170.00 per week if the YP was not in Education or training at the age of 18.</p> <p>Year 2. £170.00 per week (unless still on a training course that started prior to their 18th birthday, then see Year 1).</p> <p>Year 3. £170.00 per week (unless still on a training course that started prior to their 18th birthday, then see Year 1).</p>	

Swansea

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11+	£134.12 £146.30 £178.71
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday Festival 0-4 5-11 11+ Holiday 0-4 5-11 11+ Equipment	Over 20 miles £0.449/mile £50.00 £90.38 £110.19 £205.04 £190.63 £216.24 £310.17 Variable
Fees	<p>Standard weekly Fee Standard Criteria Fee Criteria: 1. Foster carers caring for one child aged under 11 years 2. Foster carers providing support care 3. Foster carers providing respite care</p> <p>Enhanced weekly Fee Enhanced Criteria Fee Criteria: 1. Foster carers caring for sibling groups or more than one child/young person 2. Foster carers caring for children/young people with additional needs e.g. with disabilities 3. Foster carers caring for children/young people aged 11 years and over</p>	£136.15 (27 foster carers) £161.28 (106 foster carers)
When I Am Ready 18+	When I am Ready <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Rate (For young people engaged in Education /Training and paid from the young person's 18th birthday until the 31st August following their 18th) - £339.99 • Standard Rate (Paid at all other times) - £185.00 Continuing Care 18+ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Lives Foster Carer – £511.00 for a full-time placement 	

Torfaen County

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.00 £153.00 £168.50 £209.30
Additional payments	<p>Mileage If foster carers are required to transport outside of the borough in which they live – sometimes this will be subject to a percentage reduction in line with the portion of the allowance attributed to transport costs</p> <p>Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance</p> <p>Equipment</p>	<p>£0.32/mile</p> <p>No birthday or holiday allowance but an additional week's allowance for Christmas</p> <p>Set up equipment if needed</p>
Fees	<p>Family Placement Fee paid to all mainstream foster carers, per child, when they have a placement.</p> <p>MIST foster carers offering therapeutic placements are salaried.</p> <p>Day-care provision</p>	<p>£103.75 per child (85 mainstream foster carers + nine respite only foster carers)</p> <p>Grade 5 £18,560.00 Grade 6 £22,434.00 (6 foster carers)</p> <p>£3.99 per hour up to a maximum of 8 hours</p>
When I Am Ready 18+	<p>£189.00 = support £52.85 + rent £78.25 + personal £57.90</p>	

Vale of Glamorgan

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£139.24 £123.41 £122.93 £159.34
Additional payments	<p>Mileage</p> <p>Birthday and festival allowance</p> 0-4 5-10 11-15 16+ <p>Holiday allowance</p> 0-4 5-10 11-15 16+ <p>Clothing allowance (includes: school uniform & PE kit replenishment owing to wear & tear and natural progression to comprehensive (exceptional needs is if a child is moved to a different school because of placement move, which dictates school they are placed in). Allowance also covers leisure clothes (social & leisure activities, parties) etc. NOTE: initial clothing allowance, if required, to come from child team budget</p> Equipment	<p>Over 12 miles per day £0.40 per mile</p> <p>£2.76 £2.72 £3.36 £3.39</p> <p>£5.49 £5.43 £5.39 £6.78</p> <p>£15.76 £17.08 £16.34 £16.19</p> <p>Part of allowance</p>
Fees	Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 first child	£0 (five foster carers) £53.20 per child (eight foster carers) £155.40 (40 foster carers)

	Level 3 subsequent children Level 4 first child Level 4 subsequent children	£135.20 £322.00 (two foster carers) £280.14 + 36 kinship foster carers
When I Am Ready 18+	£190.00 per week per young person if they stay in a When I am Ready Placement. This payment remains the same until they leave or reach 21 (or older if they remain in full time education).	

Wrexham

Basic allowances	0-4 5-10 11-15 16+	£166.04 £151.06 £177.38 £215.74
Additional payments	Mileage Birthday and festival allowance Holiday allowance Equipment	Information not supplied 1 week paid for each 1 week As and when
Fees	QCF Payment Therapeutic foster carers	£256.27 per week (whilst child in placement). 47 foster carers have QCF £24,000.00 per annum £26,000.00 per annum (subject to 12 month review) £28,000.00 per annum when QCF qualification obtained
When I Am Ready 18+	£189.00 per week.	

Section 2: Allowances

Payments to foster carers intended to cover the expenses incurred in looking after a child.

The Welsh Government recommended a minimum allowance of £166.00 to £189.00 for 2016/17, an increase of roughly 4% from the previous year.

The table below outlines how the recommended Welsh Government minimum allowances have increased steadily over the years:

Age group / year	0-4	5-15	16+
2012/13	£143.00	£130.00	£164.00
2013/14	£149.00	£136.00	£170.00
2014/15	£153.00	£139.00	£175.00
2015/16	£159.00	£145.00	£182.00
2016/17	£166.00	£151.00	£189.00
2017/18	£170.00	£155.00	£194.00

The full breakdown of allowances across Wales for 2016/17 is shown in the table on the following page. This shows that:

- 17 out of 22 local authorities are currently paying allowances which are at or above the government's recommended minimum rate.
- Three local authorities chose not to increase their allowances, but one of these (Powys) pay at least £43.00 per week more than the recommended rate. Those who froze allowances in 2016/17 were Merthyr Tydfil, Newport and Swansea, who paid below the recommended allowance. One local authority did increase the allowance paid to its foster carers by 4.4 per cent, but still remains below the minimum recommended rate.
- From those who provided information, 19 out of 21 local authorities pay foster carers a mileage rate in addition to their weekly allowance, with an average of 39p per mile. The highest mileage rate paid is 52p; the lowest 0p. Where mileage is paid, eight of these local authorities have minimum distance or journey type criteria to be met before any mileage can be

claimed. Some fostering services have set minimum distance criteria before foster carers are permitted to claim mileage. (See case example below)

One foster carer had a teenage girl in placement, who was not doing well at the secondary school within the catchment area. She was travelling to the school by school bus. An educational assessment was undertaken; resulting in a recommendation that her needs would be best met in moving to another school some distance from the foster home. The weekly transport to the alternative secondary school was a total of 320 miles per week, which the foster carer was told she would have to undertake herself and pay for out of her weekly allowance.

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- The Fostering Network has identified that there is wide variation across Wales with regard to additional payments made to foster carers for birthdays, festivals and holidays. Notably, four local authorities make no additional payments at all. Of those that do make such payments, the most common approach is to award one week's allowance each for birthdays and festivals, and one to two weeks' allowance for an annual holiday.

Full results of Survey of Allowances in Wales 2016/17

Local Authority	0-4	5-15	16+
BLAENAU GWENT	£166.00	£151.00 - £177.38	£215.74
BRIDGEND	£166.00	£151.00 - £177.38	£224.37
CAERPHILLY	£166.00	£151.00	£189.00
CARDIFF	£166.00	£151.00 - £177.38	£224.37
CARMARTHENSHIRE	£170.00	£160.00 - £170.00	£190.00
CEREDIGION	£166.00	£151.00 - £177.38	£215.74
CONWY	£166.00	£151.00 - £182.00	£189.00
DENBIGHSHIRE	£166.00	£151.00	£189.00
FLINTSHIRE	£166.00	£151.00 - £179.15	£217.90
GWYNEDD	£166.00	£151.00 - £181.81	£221.13
ISLE OF ANGLESEY	£166.00	£151.00 - £181.81	£221.13
MERTHYR TYDFIL	£159.00	£159.00 - £182.00	£182.00
MONMOUTHSHIRE	£166.00	£151.00 - £152.55	£197.61
NEATH PORT TALBOT	£162.12	£146.57 - £145.48	£183.19
NEWPORT	<u>£159.00</u>	£145.00	£182.00
PEMBROKESHIRE	£166.00	£151.00 - £177.38	£215.42
POWYS	<u>£232.34</u>	£232.34	£232.34
RHONDDA CYNON TAF	£166.00	£151.00	£189.00
SWANSEA	<u>£134.12</u>	£146.30 - £178.71	£178.71
TORFAEN COUNTY	£166.00	£153.00 - £168.50	£209.30
VALE OF GLAMORGAN	<u>£139.24</u>	£123.41 - £122.93	£159.34
WREXHAM	£166.00	£151.06 - £177.38	£215.74
WG recommended	£166.00	£151.00	£189.00

Green denotes equal or greater, **purple** denotes less, than WG allowance.
Underlined denotes allowance frozen from 2015-16.

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Section 3: Foster carer fees scenarios

Scenario 1. Lowest pay band / no pay. Looking after two children, one aged 0-4, the other 5-10.

Local Authority	Allowance		Total allowance	Fee			Total fee	Total income	How fee was calculated
BLAENAU GWENT	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	£25.00	£25.00		£50.00	£367.00	Band 1 x 2
BRIDGEND	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	£25.00	£25.00		£50.00	£367.00	Band 1 x 2
CAERPHILLY	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	£68.41	£68.41		£136.82	£453.82	Mainstream x 2
CARDIFF	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	0	0		0	£317.00	Band 1 receive allowance only
CARMARTHENSHIRE	£170.00	£160.00	£330.00	£35.00	£45.00		£80.00	£410.00	Age related fee x 2
CEREDIGION	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	£10.00	£20.00	£90.00	£120.00	£437.00	Age related fee x 2, no core training
CONWY	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	0	0		0	£317.00	Level 1 receive allowance only
DENBIGHSHIRE	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	0	0		0	£317.00	Primary level receive allowance only
FLINTSHIRE	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	0	0		0	£317.00	Tier 1 receive allowance only
GWYNEDD	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	0			0	£317.00	1 st 12 months get no fee
ISLE OF ANGLESEY	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	0	0		0	£317.00	Level 1 receive allowance only
MERTHYR TYDFIL	£159.00	£159.00	£317.00	0	0		0	£318.00	Band 1 receive allowance only
MONMOUTHSHIRE	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	0	0		0	£317.00	Basic FCs receive allowance only
NEATH PORT TALBOT	£162.12	£146.57	£308.69	£127.50	£127.50		£255.00	£563.69	Band B x 2
NEWPORT	£159.00	£145.00	£304.00	£50.00	£75.00		£125.00	£429.00	Age related fee x 2. Core foster carers.
PEMBROKESHIRE	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	£48.93	£48.93		£97.86	£414.86	Core training x 2
POWYS	£232.34	£232.34	£464.68	£126.41	£126.41		£252.82	£717.50	Skills allowance x 2
RHONDDA CYNON TAF	£166.00	£151.00	£317.00	£111	£111.00		£222.00	£539.00	Probationary fee x 2
SWANSEA	£134.12	£146.30	£280.42	£161.28	0		£161.28	£441.70	Enhanced fee x 1
TORFAEN COUNTY	£166.00	£153.00	£319.00	£103.75	£103.75		£207.5	£526.50	Family placement fee x 2
VALE OF GLAMORGAN	£139.24	£123.41	£262.65	0	0		0	£262.65	Level 1 receive allowance only
WREXHAM	£166.04	£151.06	£317.10	0	0		0	£317.10	
Mean			£319.34				£79.92	£399.26	
Median			£317.00				£50.00	£367.00	

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Scenario 2. Next pay band up from lowest. Looking after two children aged 5-10

Local Authority	Allowance		Total allowance	Fee			Total fee	Total income	How fee was calculated
BLAENAU GWENT	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£75.00	£75.00		£150.00	£452.00	Band 2 x 2
BRIDGEND	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£75.00	£75.00		£150.00	£452.00	Band 2 x 2
CAERPHILLY	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£176.73	£176.73		£353.46	£655.46	Career x 2
CARDIFF	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£64.86	£64.86		£129.72	£431.72	Band 2 x 2
CARMARTHENSHIRE	£170.00	£160.00	£330.00	£45.00	£45.00		£90.00	£420.00	Age-related fee
CEREDIGION	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£20.00	£20.00	£190.00	£230.00	£532.00	NVQ + Core
CONWY	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£146.00	0		£146.00	£448.00	Level 2 x 1
DENBIGHSHIRE	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£106.32	0		£106.32	£408.32	Tier 1
FLINTSHIRE	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£65.00	0		£65.00	£367.00	Tier 2
GWYNEDD	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£100.00			£100.00	£402.00	Level 1 x 1
ISLE OF ANGLESEY	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£75.75	£75.75		£151.50	£453.50	Level 2 x 2
MERTHYR TYDFIL	£159.00	£159.00	£318.00	£65.00	£65.00		£130.00	£448.00	Band 2 x 2
MONMOUTHSHIRE	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£50.00	£50.00		£100.00	£402.00	Level 1 x 2
NEATH PORT TALBOT	£146.57	£146.57	£293.14	£143.00	£143.00		£286.00	£579.14	NVQ Diploma level x 2
NEWPORT	£145.00	£145.00	£290.00	£150.00	£100.00		£250.00	£540.00	2 x age fee + 1 x career foster carer fee
PEMBROKESHIRE	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£108.56	£97.86	£32.48	£238.90	£540.90	Core training x 2 NVQ level x 2 avail x 1
POWYS	£232.34	£232.34	£464.68	£126.41	£126.41		£252.82	£717.50	Flat rate x 2
RHONDDA CYNON TAF	£151.00	£151.00	£302.00	£166.50	£166.50		£333.00	£635.00	Mainstream fee x 2
SWANSEA	£146.50	£146.50	£293.00	£161.28			£161.28	£454.28	Enhanced fee x 1
TORFAEN COUNTY	£153.00	£153.00	£306.00	£103.75	£103.75		£207.50	£513.50	Mainstream fee x 2
VALE OF GLAMORGAN	£123.41	£123.41	£246.82	£53.20	£53.20		£106.40	£353.22	Level 2 x 2
WREXHAM	£151.06	£151.06	£302.12	256.27			£256.27	£558.39	QCF fee x 2
Mean			£307.72				£181.55	£489.27	
Median			£302.00				£150.75	£452.75	

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Scenario 3. Highest pay band mainstream foster carer, looking after one child aged 16+

Local Authority	Allowance	Fee 1	2	3	Total fee	Total income	How fee was calculated
BLAENAU GWENT	£215.74	£125.00			£125.00	£340.74	Band 3
BRIDGEND	£224.37	£125.00			£125.00	£349.37	Band 3
CAERPHILLY	£189.00	£176.73			£176.73	£365.73	Mainstream FC
CARDIFF	£224.37	£175.83			£175.83	£400.20	Band 3
CARMARTHENSHIRE	£190.00	£60.00			£60.00	£250.00	Age related fee
CEREDIGION	£215.74	£135.00	£25.00		£160.00	£375.74	Assumed 20 years' service
CONWY	£189.00	£234.62			£234.62	£423.62	Level 3
DENBIGHSHIRE	£189.00	£186.07			£186.07	£375.07	Tier 3
FLINTSHIRE	£217.90	£125.00			£125.00	£342.90	Tier 3
GWYNEDD	£221.13	£200.00	£50.00		£250.00	£471.13	Level 3
ISLE OF ANGLESEY	£221.13	£202.00			£202.00	£423.13	Level 5
MERTHYR TYDFIL	£182.00	£160.00			£160.00	£342.00	Band 3
MONMOUTHSHIRE	£197.61	£75.00			£75.00	£272.61	Level 3
NEATH PORT TALBOT	£183.19	£193.00			£193.00	£376.19	Band E
NEWPORT	£182.00	£150.00	£100.00		£250.00	£432.00	Career foster carers
PEMBROKESHIRE	£215.42	£54.28	£48.93	£32.48	£135.69	£351.11	NVQ + Core Training + avail
POWYS	£232.34	£126.41			£126.41	£358.75	No bands
RHONDDA CYNON TAF	£189.00	£166.50			£166.50	£355.50	Mainstream FC
SWANSEA	£178.71	£161.28			£161.28	£339.99	Enhanced weekly fee
TORFAEN COUNTY	£209.30	£103.75			£103.75	£313.05	Mainstream FC
VALE OF GLAMORGAN	£159.34	£155.40			£155.40	£314.74	Level 3
WREXHAM	£215.74	£256.27			£256.27	£472.01	QCF foster carers
Mean					£163.80	£365.71	
Median					£160.64	£357.13	

Owing to the varied fee payment structures in place across Wales, it has not been possible to provide an 'at a glance' table that provides comparisons. Therefore, in order to allow a high level comparison, we have set out three possible fostering household/case studies:

1. Foster carer on the lowest pay band – (in many cases this would mean no fee.) They have two children in placement, one aged 0-4 years; the other 5-10 years.
2. Next pay band up from lowest. They also have two children in placement, but in this case they are both aged 5-10 years. Two fostering services only have one pay band.
3. Highest pay band – (not including specialist foster carers.) This foster carer has one child living with them aged 16+ years. (Not all fostering services have three pay bands for mainstream foster carers so this may be the same fee level as case study 1 and 2 for some local authorities).

This survey highlighted considerable variance in income for foster carers in Wales. The key findings are:

- Fostering services generally employ a three to five tiered fee structure, whereby foster carers at the start of their career commence on the lowest pay band – without a fee.
- Two fostering services pay all foster carers a flat fee without any banding structure.
- Progression through the bands where fees are paid is often dependent on completing training and achieving qualification, e.g. NVQ. However, some fostering services increase fees for length of service. Some fostering services pay a graduated fee based on the age of the child, with more being paid for older children.
- The majority (16 out of 22) of fostering services pay a fee per child in placement (as per allowances) rather than per household.
- Entry-level foster carers looking after two children 0-4 years and 5-10 years (scenario 1) have a vast difference in pay across Wales, varying from £263.00 per week to £717.50. This is a difference of £454.50 per week. The mean total income in this scenario is £399.00 and the median is £367.00.
- A foster carer's weekly income at the second, or standard, rate of pay, looking after two school age children (scenario 2), varies significantly from £353.00 to £717.50. This is a difference of £364.50 per week. The mean total income for this scenario is £489 and the median is £453.00.

Foster carers on the highest mainstream pay band, looking after one older teenager (scenario 3); have a weekly income ranging from £250.00 to £472.00. This is a difference of £222.00 per week. The mean total income for this scenario is £366.00 and the median is £357.00.

Section 4: When I am Ready

In 2012, The Fostering Network (in partnership with Action for Children Wales) led the successful UK wide campaign, 'Don't Move Me'. This advocated for young people to be able stay with their fostering families until they reached the age of 21. This has proven to provide stability to some of the most vulnerable young people, who otherwise may have found themselves isolated in unsupported living arrangements. New provisions to allow care leavers to stay put in their former foster placement came into force in England in 2014 and Wales in 2016, with the introduction of the 'When I am Ready' scheme.

From April 2016, young people in Wales can now be afforded the opportunity to remain with their foster families beyond the age of 18 years and move out when they are ready, as the scheme title suggests, up to the age of 21, or up to age 25 if they are completing an agreed programme of education or training. This change to the law came into force within the new Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The code of practice related to the When I am Ready Scheme states that:

*"The rate of the When I am Ready allowance is set by the local authority and should cover all reasonable costs of supporting the young person to remain living with their foster carer. The Welsh Government recommends that the financial support given to When I am Ready foster carers should amount to the same as the National Minimum Allowances paid to foster carers."*²

The full results of The Fostering Network survey, in relation to payments made to foster carers with When I am Ready placements can be found on the following page. However, in summary:

- 17 out of 22 local authority fostering services in Wales currently pay at or above the standard 16+ minimum recommended allowance for foster carers hosting young people under the When I am Ready post 18 scheme. Those who do not are highlighted in purple in the table.
- Two local authorities in Wales who pay below the Welsh Government recommended allowance will meet the minimum allowance if the young person is in education, employment or training (EET).
- Payments are often made up from a contribution from the young person's housing benefit entitlement, rather than being fully paid by fostering services.
- A number of local authorities have differing payment arrangements, depending on whether or not the young person is in education, employment or training.

² Welsh Government (2016): *When I am Ready Good Practice Guide*.

When I am Ready payment information 2016-17

Local Authority	When I am Ready payment per week	Notes
		HB = housing benefit YP = Young person
BLAENAU GWENT	£215.74	Same for 3 years
BRIDGEND	£215.74	Same for 3 years
CAERPHILLY	£189.00 NEET £287.83 EET	Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). In Education, Employment or Training (EET). YP contributes £20.00, deducted from FC payment
CARDIFF	£189.00	Same for each year
CARMARTHENSHIRE	£190.00	
CEREDIGION	£224.37	Same as 16+. Same for 3 years
CONWY	£189.00	
DENBIGHSHIRE	£189.00	
FLINTSHIRE	£189.00	
GWYNEDD	£189.00	Same for 3 years. YP contributes HB which is deducted from FC payment.
ISLE OF ANGLESEY	£189.00	
MERTHYR TYDFIL	£140.00	
MONMOUTHSHIRE	£160.00	Based on HB up to 140. YP contribution of 20.
NEATH PORT TALBOT	£204.00	HB 80 YP 15 'Practical and emotional support' 109
NEWPORT	£107.46	Average payment from 4 arrangements
PEMBROKESHIRE	£201.00	HB is then deducted from this figure
POWYS	no data provided	no data provided
RHONDDA CYNON TAF	£170.00	Higher if YP in EET, in which case FCs receive the same as when fostering at age 17
SWANSEA	£339.99 £185.00	If YP in EET, but only until end of the school year post 18. For subsequent years
TORFAEN COUNTY	£189.00	Support 52.85 Rent 78.25 Personal 57.90
VALE OF GLAMORGAN	£190.00	Same for 3 years, continues after 21 if in education
WREXHAM	£189.00	
WG recommended	£189.00	

Conclusion

This report has demonstrated the scale of inequality of financial arrangements for foster carers across Wales, in particular in relation to fees. In general, the levels at which allowances are paid have been improving, especially at the higher end, although a significant variation remains.

There are currently no national minimum recommended payments to foster carers. This report demonstrates that one typical scenario could mean foster carers in one part of the country receiving £37,000 per year compared with £13,000 in another, for the same fostering provision. This indicates that there is a postcode lottery in place when it comes to fees and allowance.

The notable disparity in foster carers' total income is largely down to fees, but there is also a significant discrepancy when it comes to allowances. There is also less consistency in terms of additional ad hoc expenses payments, such as birthdays, holidays and celebrations. Mileage payments vary from zero to 52 pence per mile. The largely rural nature of the country means that travel costs to and from schools, meetings and other fostering-related activities will soon add up and also create inequality.

One foster carer called Fosterline Wales for advice, as they had been told by their fostering service that, they were not eligible to claim expenses for facilitating their foster child's sporting activities, which involves travelling to competitions UK wide, often incurring overnight stays..

Fosterline Wales 2017

Foster carers have told The Fostering Network that their primary motivation to foster is to make a real difference to children's lives and not for monetary gain. Nonetheless, payments to foster carers for the vital task they perform is a vital component that does impact on recruitment and retention.

In spite of Welsh Government guidance, six local authorities currently pay less than the 16+ allowances rate to foster carers hosting young people under the When I am Ready 18+ scheme, and some pay less for those young people who are not in

education, employment or training. Foster carers in these local authorities in Wales are, therefore, faced with the decision to take a reduction in income or require a young person to move on at a crucial stage of their life.

This report acknowledges an absence of data from the independent sector. Without clear information about independent fostering provider payments, it will be difficult to get a full picture of the financial fees and allowances paid to all foster carers across Wales. In any development of the

NFF, consideration will need to be given as to how to establish the right balance between local authority, third sector non-profit providers and commercial independent fostering providers. Whilst data is not available about fees and payments made to foster carers by the independent sector, one can hypothesise, that one of the factors that influence many foster carers to remain with independent providers is that allowances and fees are comparatively higher than local authority providers.

This report highlights that some fostering services in Wales have transparent, up-to-date data on their websites about fees and allowance, but unfortunately this was a minority. Consequently, it is proposed that the NFF should introduce consistent reporting mechanisms that will make it transparent for interested parties to compare and contrast, and allow for benchmarking to take place.

The Fostering Network welcomes the recommendation in the Phase 1 report that advocates for the standardisation and collection of fostering data, and maximising the opportunities presented by the implementation of the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS).

This report recognises that fostering, while rooted in providing families for children, is not a single entity. Some foster carers offer occasional short break care, others emergency or short-term placements, while some provide children with a home for their whole childhood and transition into adulthood. Many foster carers do a mix of these forms of fostering. Some foster carers are approved to provide care specifically to members of their extended family. These 'kinship' or 'family and friends' foster carers may have different needs and expectations from some of their 'mainstream' colleagues and this will need to be reflected in the development of the fostering framework.

For decades, fostering in Wales has benefited from a dedicated, committed and expert workforce of foster carers helping fostered children transform their lives. We

should no longer take this dedication for granted. There is a real need for change. Many foster carers are not paid for the skills, time and expertise they bring to fostering. Of those who are paid, only a minority receive anything resembling a living wage, although a very small number do get significant fee payments.

Not only addressing inequality, the development of a national fee and allowance structure would also help to mitigate the migration of foster carers and concerns around retention, which we know is a huge challenge for all fostering services.

The Fostering Network welcomes the development of a National Fostering Framework in Wales and the ongoing work to create a foster care system that recognises, values and rewards foster carers in the vital tasks they perform. Foster carers are key members of the professional team involved in the care of looked after children. In our view the payment of no fees and low fees are an injustice, which threatens to compromise the quality of foster care.

At worst, low or no pay means that some foster carers will be forced to maintain their households on very low income levels, and this can be unsatisfactory for foster carers, their children and fostered children alike. Being part of a low paid workforce can also compound the low status foster carers frequently have in relation to other professionals. The Fostering Network believes that it is a matter of social justice that foster carers should be paid; they are the only professional group working with children which is (very largely) unpaid. No foster carer should be expected to live in poverty as a result of their foster care responsibilities. If fostering services are to be able to recruit the number of foster carers they need with the skills that are required to be able to transform children's lives, levels of pay must be set that are comparable with others in the children's social care workforce.

This report concludes that by addressing the inequalities in fees and allowance, this will inevitably have a positive impact, both for foster carers and the children they look after.

Recommendations

- **No foster carer should be out-of-pocket as a result of fostering.** The Fostering Framework should consult with foster carers to agree an allowance that covers all costs, and these rates must keep pace with inflation.
- **Payments and allowances should be separate and clearly identified, so that foster carers know which portion of their fostering income should be spent on caring for the child in their care, and which is for the job that they do.** Some fostering services will make a lump sum ‘financial package’, which does not make the split clear. Lump sum payments are harder to monitor and create confusion for foster carers. The framework should move towards avoiding the payment of lump sums. The administration of allowances should be transparent. Fostering services should distinguish clearly between allowances and fee payments. Every foster carer should understand clearly what allowances they are entitled to. Payment slips and payment records should be understandable, and payments should be made promptly.
- **Foster carers should receive payment to cover ongoing expenses between placements.**
- **The Fostering Network also recognises a third area of expenditure: additional housing costs (that is to say rent or mortgage costs) and this should be recognised in any NFF development.** These are not clearly recognised by the allowances system, although some loans or additional allowances may be paid to a small minority of individual foster carers. Although The Fostering Network does not expect this to change in the near future because of the current economic climate, we believe that the issue should be acknowledged and debated with a view to addressing accommodation costs in the future, and responding more flexibly to accommodation needs in the present.
- **Foster carers should be properly paid for the fostering work they do, including a retainer between placements, regardless of employment outside of fostering.** In cases where the needs of fostered children dictate that the foster carer must be available at all times, the level of fee payments should reflect the commitment demanded of the foster carer. Further research is needed and should focus on the payment of retainers, sickness pay, payment during allegations i.e. suspension without prejudice etc.
- **Foster carers should receive retainer fees between placements.**

- **Foster carers should, when required, receive retainer fees to keep a placement open when a fostered child is making the transition home.**
- **Fostering services should pay its foster carers mileage allowances based on the accumulative mileage they do per month, and not restricted to single trips over a specified amount of miles.**
- **Allowances should be sufficient enough to provide high quality care for children and to cover foster carers' expenses.** Fostered children should enjoy a decent standard of living, sufficient to promote their wellbeing and development, be treated as favourably as other members of the fostering household, be able to participate fully in their community, and maintain appropriate contact with their family.
- **Most expenditure should be covered by core allowances.** There will be a need for additional payments to meet individual needs, but these should be kept to a minimum. Because the core allowances must reflect the needs of the wide range of fostering families, they should be relevant to expenditure patterns of people on middle incomes. They should not be set at the most basic level, reflecting expenditure in the least affluent households, nor should they reflect the expenditure of the most affluent.
- **Allowances should be reviewed annually and adjusted to keep up with rises in the cost of living and at least with the annual rate of inflation.** Adjustments should follow a process of consultation and negotiation between services and foster carers. Allowances should not be shaved as a result of the financial pressures affecting the majority of fostering services.
- **Tiered payment schemes are preferable.** These are likely to take into account factors such as length of service, qualifications, training undertaken, capacity for learning demonstrated by reflection on practice, and the ages and needs of children fostered, as well as time invested. When well-managed, tiered schemes can be an important mechanism for the development and recognition of the skills of foster carers, as well as a motivational tool for improving performance.
- **Foster carers should spend all their allowances on the care of the child and other costs involved in the fostering task.** Foster carers should have discretion to manage their allowances; giving foster carers discretion over these budgets is consistent with delegated responsibility.
- **The NFF should ensure that each fostering service has clear guidelines on expenses, while striking a balance with a foster carer's autonomy to manage the household budget as they see fit.**

- **The NFF should address the inequalities that exist within individual local authority boundaries.** There is evidence emerging that a lack of clarity and consistency in payments to foster carers runs not just between local authorities, but within them as well. Recent calls to Fosterline Wales have highlighted this growing problem. Example areas where Fosterline has learnt of a worrying lack of clarity include: school trips, eligibility for free school meals, specialist equipment costs, mileage for extracurricular activities, and transport to and from school.
- **The difficulty in sourcing accurate and up-to-date information from fostering services on fees and allowances demonstrates the need for a robust national reporting system to be in place as part of the National Fostering Framework.**
- **Combining fostering and other work.** Foster carers are often required to reduce their hours or stop working when they become foster carers, but are not often financially compensated for this. The Fostering Network believes that a change in approach to, and support for, foster carers doing other work in addition to fostering is essential for both recruitment and retention. Such a change must prioritise the needs of individual fostered children and be considered as the NFF moves forward.
- **With reference to When I am Ready, foster carers should not have to meet the costs involved in a young person they previously fostered continuing to live with them beyond the age of 18.** Further consideration should be given as to how local authorities and independent fostering providers (IFPs) work together with IFP foster carers who want to offer When I am Ready arrangements to a young person they are fostering. The When I am Ready arrangement is not a foster placement, so can be negotiated separately to the fostering agreements and contracts, although some frameworks are including reference to When I am Ready within their tendering processes. However, the IFP needs to be fully involved in the negotiations as decisions made will have an impact on that foster carer's availability and the assessment of their ongoing suitability to foster, as well as having financial implications for all involved. Where an IFP has a continuing role in supporting foster carers who are providing a staying put placement, it is not unreasonable for a fee for this support to be agreed. Commissioning frameworks need to take this issue on board.

Next steps

The Fostering Network will continue to lobby and campaign to ensure that allowances reflect the reality of the costs of caring for a fostered child, including the various nuances across the UK.

The Fostering Network Wales would welcome further dialogue on the elements raised in this survey of fees and allowances, and welcomes the opportunity to play a key role in developing a National Fostering Framework in Wales.

We propose that further work is undertaken to:

- Disseminate the findings of this report to foster carers, policy makers, social work practitioners, third sector organisations and organisations and individuals.
- Encourage constructive dialogue, consultation and negotiation concerning fees and allowances between foster carers and fostering services.
- Bring together foster carers and fostering services to discuss the issues of fees and allowances.
- A review of the When I am Ready should be undertaken in the near future to examine its effectiveness, both for your people and foster carers.

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