

Scotland Foster Care Allowances and Fees Survey 2017-18: Summary Report

1. Introduction

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

We work to ensure all fostered children and young people experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

2. Background

All approved foster carers in Scotland receive a weekly fostering allowance which is designed to cover the cost of caring for a fostered child. This includes spending on food, clothes, toiletries, travel and all other expenses incurred. The Scottish Government does not currently publish a national minimum allowance for foster carers, but are consulting on this as part of their review of allowances in 2018.

Fee payments may be made on top of allowances to recognise a foster carer's time, skills and experience.

3. About this report

In the summer of 2017 The Fostering Network conducted a survey of all 32 local authorities in Scotland, using freedom of information requests (Fol), in order to get a picture of fostering income for local authority foster carers across the country. The wording of the Fol was as follows:

1) Please could you tell me your 2017-18 weekly foster care allowances for all age bands, NOT including any fee/reward element for foster carers.

2) Please detail your current fee/reward structure for foster carers (NB this is different to allowances for the child). Please include:

i) Details of the levels/bands for carers and how much you pay per week at each level/band.

ii) The number of foster carers on each level/band, including those that receive no fee on top of the child's allowance.

3) Please could you tell me your weekly allowances to former foster carers looking after young people in 16+/18+ Continuing Care arrangements, broken down by year 1, year 2, and year 3+ if necessary.

4) Please detail your current fee/reward structure for former foster carers looking after young people in 16+/18+ Continuing Care arrangements. Please include:

i) Details of the levels/bands and how much you pay per week at each level/band.

ii) The number of former foster carers on each level/band, including those that receive no fee on top of the child's allowance.

4. Survey of foster care allowances 2017-18: Scotland Summary

4.1 Survey of foster care allowances 2017-18: Scotland Summary

We asked local authorities for the foster care allowances for all age bands, as well as those for continuing care placements after foster care ends at 16+/18+.

For the past few years we have asked for the 0 – 4 age group only, but have expanded this year to include all age bands. Therefore we are unable to compare changes in allowances with previous years, apart from in the 0-4 age band. Full results are shown in the table in section 4.3.

4.2

Key Findings

- The survey found that allowances for 0 – 4 year olds vary from £77.69 to £196.71 per week depending on where in Scotland the foster carer lives.
- Allowances for 0 – 4 year olds vary between local authorities by as much as £119.02 per week: £6,189 over the course of a year
- Allowances for 5 – 10 year olds vary between local authorities by as much as £100.31 per week: £5,216 over the course of a year
- Allowances for 11 – 15 year olds vary between local authorities by as much as £132 per week: £6,864 over the course of a year
- Allowances for 16+ year olds vary between local authorities by as much as £154.60 per week: £8,039 over the course of a year
- 31 out of 32 Scottish local authorities pay less than £170 per week for 0 – 4 year olds, the national minimum allowance in Wales
- Nearly two thirds of local authorities (20 out of 32) froze their fostering allowances this year
- When compared with national minimum allowances in England and Wales, local authorities in Scotland lag behind more so in the lower age groups (0 – 4 and 5 – 10) than higher ones. See Appendix 2.
- 10 out of 32 local authorities had no set policy for continuing care allowances, either because it had not been developed yet or because the numbers are so low that each case is decided individually.
- Four local authorities reduce allowances paid to foster carers after the young person enters continuing care aged 16+/18+; 19 local authorities keep the same allowance or increase it, and the remaining nine either provided no information or had no policy available.

4.3 Full results of 2017-18 Scotland Survey of 0-4 Allowances

Green denotes an increase compared with last year.

* reported combined fee and allowance.

Local authority	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15	% change 16/17-17/18
Welsh Government	£170	£155	£155	£194	-
Aberdeen City	£131.47	£130.17	£130.17	£128.88	1.0
Aberdeenshire	£144.28	£142.86	£142.86	£140.33	1.0
Angus Council	£147.18	£145	£142.86	£140.33	1.5
Argyll & Bute	£196.71	£196.71	£196.71	£265.23*	0.0
Clackmannanshire	£134.40	£134.40	£134.40	£134.40	0.0
Dumfries & Galloway	£130.34	£130.34	£130.34	£130.34	0.0
Dundee City	£136.70	£135.01	£133.34	£130.97	1.3
East Ayrshire	£152.70	£205*	£205*	£200.00*	N/A
E. Dunbartonshire	£128.22	£128.22	£128.22	£125.09	0.0
East Lothian	£114.45	£114.45	£114.45	£114.45	0.0
East Renfrewshire	£125.09	£125.09	£125.09	£125.09	0.0
Edinburgh	£102.42	£101.40	£101.40	£101.04	1.0
Falkirk	£137.18	£137.18	£137.18	£137.18	0.0
Fife	£93.23	£92.31	£91.40	£89.61	1.0
Glasgow City	£137.18	£137.18	£137.18	£137.18	0.0
Highland Council	£77.69	£77.69	£77.69	£77.69	0.0
Inverclyde	£127.59	£127.59	£127.59	£127.59	0.0
Midlothian	£100.32	£100.32	£100.32	£100.32	0.0
Moray	£142.86	£142.86	£142.85	£140.33	0.0
North Ayrshire	£131.26	£131.26	£131.26	£400.00*	0.0
North Lanarkshire	£141.41	£138.64	£137.27	£137.27	2.0
Orkney Islands	£142.86	£142.86	£142.86	£140.33	0.0
Perth & Kinross	£134.47	£134.47	£134.47	£134.47	0.0
Renfrewshire	£108	£122.59	£383.95*	£383.95*	Querying
Scottish Borders	£123.68	£121.25	£121.25	£120.05	2.0
Shetland Islands	£145	£142.86	£142.86	£140.33	1.5
South Ayrshire	£147	£147	£292.15*	£289.26*	0.0
South Lanarkshire	£139.33	£139.33	£139.33	£136.87	0.0
Stirling	£134.40	£134.40	£134.40	£134.40	0.0
Western Isles	£140	£140	£140	£96.82	0.0
W. Dunbartonshire	£142.86	£142.86	£142.86	£140.33	0.0
West Lothian	£107.90	£105.78	£103.71	£101.68	2.0

4.4 Scotland survey of foster care allowances 2017 – 18: all age bands

Red: below England minimum (also below Wales minimum apart from 11-15 age group)

Blue: below Wales minimum

Local authority	0 - 4	5 - 10	11 - 15	16+
England National Minimum	£125 - £128 10 below	£141 8 below	£161 6 below	£188 6 below
Wales National Minimum	£170 21 + 10 below	£155 10 + 8 below	£155 0 below	£194 1 + 6 below
Aberdeen City	£131.47	£149.75	£186.43	£226.75
Aberdeenshire	£144.28	£164.35	£204.60	£248.90
Angus Council	£147.18	£167.65	£208.71	£253.90
Argyll & Bute	£196.71	£196.71	£240.00	£240.00
Clackmannanshire	£134.40	£153.09	£190.58	£231.79
Dumfries & Galloway	£130.34	£148.47	£184.80	£224.77
Dundee City	£136.70	£155.70	£193.82	£235.80
East Ayrshire	£152.70	£152.70	£224.50	£224.50
East Dunbartonshire	£128.22	£146.05	£181.81	£221.13
East Lothian	£114.45	£133.70	£157 - £163	£200.11
East Renfrewshire	£125.09	£142.49	£177.38	£177.38
Edinburgh	£102.42	£124.72	£155 - £159	£191.52
Falkirk	£137.18	£156.26	£194.53	£226.84
Fife	£93.23	£105.33	£130.72	£167.06
Glasgow City	£137.18	£156.30	£194.54	£236.60
Highland Council	£77.69	£96.40	£120.00	£155.36
Inverclyde	£127.59	£145.34	£180.93	£220.05
Midlothian	£100.32	£117.20	£138 - £143	£175.41
Moray	£142.86	£162.73	£202.58	£246.44
North Ayrshire	£131.26	£162.90	£202.79	£262.60
North Lanarkshire	£141.41	£161.08	£200.51	£243.89
Orkney Islands	£142.86	£162.73	£202.58	£246.44
Perth & Kinross	£134.47	£153.16	£190.68	£231.91
Renfrewshire	£108.00	£108.00	£108.00	£108.00
Scottish Borders	£123.68	£123.68	£185.50	£185.50
Shetland Islands	£145.00	£165.17	£205.62	£250.14
South Ayrshire	£147.00	£147.00	£177.00	£207.00
South Lanarkshire	£139.33	£158.72	£197.56	£240.30
Stirling	£134.40	£153.09	£190.58	£231.79
Western Isles	£140.00	£160.00	£199.00	£242.00
West Dunbartonshire	£142.86	£162.73	£202.58	£246.44
West Lothian	£107.90	£133.91	£166.61 - £166.58	£215.79

4.5 Allowances conclusion

We know that there is concern across Scotland that allowances do not always cover the costs of foster care. In 2016 our State of the Nation survey asked foster carers in Scotland whether they felt that the allowances they received covered the full cost of looking after the child: **two thirds** of them said no.

Some comments from the survey reflecting this feeling:

“I feel that we are constantly spending more than the total allowance and fee to pay for our foster children to participate in all of the normal family activities that we participate in.”

“When including the costs of regular new shoes and clothes for growing children, food costs (especially ensuring a healthy varied diet with loads of fresh fruit and veg), outings (can be very expensive even to go to soft play), hair cuts, bus fares, swimming lessons, snack money for nursery/school, treats & toys/books to name but a few, the allowances don't go very far.”

“Allowances are set by council but do not reflect the individuals. For example in a rural community we have to travel long distance for even "local" football matches 80 or even 90 miles which towns/cities do not have to pay. An expensive hobby can easily eat into any allowance, for example.”

In September 2017 a national review of care allowances was announced by the Scottish Government. At the moment children in foster care across Scotland are living without the safety net of national minimum foster care allowances, leading to a postcode lottery of support. Allowances are designed to cover the costs of looking after a fostered child, yet vary across Scotland in a way that these costs do not. Everywhere else in the UK has a national minimum allowance set by Government. We are hopeful that the review of allowances will lead to a national minimum for foster care being adopted as soon as possible.

5. Survey of Continuing Care payments: Scotland summary

5.1 Introduction

Information was gathered from all local authorities. In our analysis we compared the foster care allowances paid in the 16-18 category with those paid for Continuing Care. In this way we can estimate what proportion of foster carers may be expected to accept a drop in financial support if offering Continuing Care. The full results are shown in the table starting on page eight.

5.2 Continuing Care payments

- 10 out of 32 local authorities had no set policy for continuing care allowances, either because it had not been developed yet or because the numbers are so low that each case is decided individually.
- Four local authorities reduce allowances paid to foster carers after the young person enters continuing care aged 16+/18+; 20 local authorities keep the same allowance or increase it, and the remaining eight either provided no information or had no policy available
- Nine out of 32 local authorities pay no fee for former foster carers in continuing care arrangements.

5.3 Full results of Continuing Care survey

Red: reduction in allowance post 16/18

Green: same or increase in allowance post 16/18

Local authority	Allowance per week	Fee per week
Aberdeen City	£211.68.	No fee. Three “supported lodging” carers.
Aberdeenshire	No carers. However they would get paid the 16 to 21 age group fostering rate.	The carers will also continue to receive their skills allowance when the young person moves to continuing care.
Angus Council	We do not yet have a formal scheme in place. A report will be submitted to elected members in the near future with a detailed proposal. In the meantime we are remunerating foster carers providing continuing care in such a way as to ensure that they are at no financial detriment compared to having a child in the same placement on a fostering basis. We currently have 2 carers in receipt of such payments for providing continuing care placements.	
Argyll & Bute	Each case different.	N/A.
Clackmannanshire	Allowance of £150 per week for young people aged 18+. Clackmannanshire Council will continue to pay fostering allowances and fees for young people aged 16-18.	For carers looking after young people aged 18+ there will be a flat fee of £200 per week. Four carers will transition to these arrangements in the near future.
Dumfries & Galloway	If this relates to children that have moved into further education that we continue to pay for, then allowances remain the same and do not change over the period child is at university/college.	Too few to allow numbers.
Dundee City	16 – 18: £ 235.80. 18 + to be confirmed. The council's Corporate Parenting Plan will be published in October 2017 and the Council's Continuing Care protocol is linked to this. A consultation event is planned with Foster Carers in August 2017 to agree fees and allowances associated with continuing care up to the age of 21.	Mainstream fee £155.13 per placement. Two carers.
East Ayrshire	For age 16+, the rate is as for fostering (£224.50). The age range 18+ is paid at a rate of £245 per week to supported carers.	No fee. One carer.

East Dunbartonshire	£221.13.	No fee. Three carers.
East Lothian	Foster carers continue to receive full fees and fostering allowances until the young person reaches their 19th birthday. Foster carers offering continuing care to a young person past their 19th birthday continue to receive fostering allowances equal to the maintenance element only (no pocket money and clothing allowance).	After 19 th birthday fostering fee continues at the same level. Two carers.
East Renfrewshire	£319.62.	No fee.
Edinburgh	Case by case.	Case by case. 11 Mainstream carers (18+ fees) 12 Specialist carers (18+ fees).
Falkirk	Carers looking after young people in continuing care are currently paid the 16+ fostering allowance and relevant fee . We are currently developing our Supported Carer Scheme and are likely to move to an enhanced flat rate fee for such placements in line with other authorities.	Yes: see left.
Fife	Support schemes are currently being developed around continuing care arrangements. At present they are being looked at and approved on a case by case basis based on the existing foster care rates and the particular circumstances. Fife Council also have an 18+ Foster Care Scheme and Supported Lodgings Scheme.	See left.
Glasgow City	£236.60.	£50 (84 carers). £200 (22 carers).
Highland Council	The supported lodgings arrangement is that individuals who were previously considered foster carers are paid £225 per week per child. There are no set changes in this amount due to time or age of the young person.	There are no set rewards for becoming support lodgers and allowing young people to stay in their placements.
Inverclyde	None.	None.
Midlothian	Same as 16+ (£175.41).	Same as 16+. Six carers.
Moray	As yet we have no young people	See left. Three carers expected from

	in continuing care. Fees and allowances will remain as they were in the fostering placement with adjustments to the allowances made as a young person's level of earning changes.	end of 2017.
North Ayrshire	None yet in placement.	N/A.
North Lanarkshire	£289.68.	No fee.
Orkney Islands	None in placement.	None in placement.
Perth & Kinross	Our weekly allowance for Continuing Care is £88.09 for young people aged 16-21 years (placements are reviewed annually).	The weekly carer fee for Continuing Care is £231.91 per week. There is only one fee structure for carers within the Continuing Care arrangement. Fewer than five carers
Renfrewshire	£187.	No reward structure. 18 carers
Scottish Borders	Same as pre-18 (£185.50).	Same as pre-18. 11 carers.
Shetland Islands	Currently the weekly allowance is the same as above for foster carers:16+ level (£250.14 per week).	No fee. One carer.
South Ayrshire	No response.	No response.
South Lanarkshire	16-19 is £240.30. No response for 19+ age group.	16-19: £112.50 (three carers), £159.26 (eight carers), £196.02 (nine carers), 588.05 (no carers).
Stirling	£175.79 per week for supported carers and £224.83 per week for supported lodgings carers (standard combined fee and allowance).	Same fee as when fostering: Level 1 £106.63 Level 2 £165.86 Level 3 £195.46 Nine carers.
Western Isles	"Full maintenance" (£242).	Level 1 fee. One carer.
West Dunbartonshire	£235 (minus £10/£20 which the young person pays).	No fee. Five carers.
West Lothian	Same as pre-18 (£215.79).	They get the fostering fee and an enhanced fee at a daily rate of £238.14 for young person aged 16+. One Carer.

The results of the continuing care survey, showing such variation across Scotland, demonstrate clearly the need for a national continuing care allowance to be introduced so that no foster carer is forced to accept a drop in income in return for their offering a home to a care leaver.

6. Survey of foster carer fees 2017-18: Scotland summary

6.1

Key findings

- Responses were received from all local authorities.
- The average entry-level fee for foster carers looking after one child aged 0-4 in Scotland is £111.93 per week.
- The average top band mainstream fee for foster carers looking after one child in Scotland is £217.97 per week.
- Approximately five per cent of local authority foster carers in Scotland do not receive a fee.
- One local authority (East Ayrshire) does not offer a fee separate from the allowance for foster carers.
- One fifth (six out of 32) of local authority fostering services in Scotland pay no fee at all to foster carers on the lowest band.
- One fifth (six out of 32) of local authority fostering services operate a banding system based on the age of the children. The majority of other services use a skills-based banding system, from two to four bands.
- Depending on where in the country a foster carer lives, they can receive vastly different amounts of money in total household income. For example, one scenario we have considered shows an annual difference of **£21,487.44**

6.2 More detail on the methodology

This was a complex piece of research to undertake, not least because every local authority in Scotland has a slightly different approach to foster carer fees. Therefore it is difficult to compare like with like. Some operate a banding system (varying from one to four bands), while others may pay a flat fee. Some local authorities vary fees according to the age of the child (as with allowances), and some offer high level specialist schemes for a select few foster carers, while others operate a combination of these approaches.

We determined the “highest mainstream fee band” by ignoring specialist fee schemes for foster carers looking after children with very high needs. These could be identified by a combination of the name of the scheme (e.g. “Teen Turnaround”) and the numbers of foster carers on them being very low. The reason we ignored top level specialist schemes is because we wanted to get a picture of the typical foster carer picture across the country, rather than a select few highly trained and remunerated carers.

We determined the “lowest mainstream fee band” by determining if firstly any foster carers received no fee, and then if all foster carers received a fee, choosing the lowest fee reported. In the case of services operating age-related bands, this was always the 0-4 band.

Not all local authorities provided all of the information requested. In particular four respondents did not give information on how many foster carers were on each fee band. The following table summarises fees and assumes each household has only one child in placement.

Scotland	Highest fee	Lowest fee	"No fee" band	Age bands	Total FCs	FCs no fee
Overall	£413.22	£0	6	6	2449	133
Mean	£217.97	£111.93			91	5

6.3 Fee Scenarios

In this section we compare how the income from fees of an example foster carer can vary across the country. Data for this section is based on 31 out of 32 local authorities, as one did not provide sufficient information.

6.4 Scenario 1

- Entry level foster carer, with two children aged 4 and 6 in placement.
- In just over one fifth (seven out of 31) of local authorities, this foster carer would receive no fee.
- The highest weekly fee they would receive is £400 in East Dunbartonshire.
- The maximum difference in total annual income from fees between two similar foster carers in different parts of Scotland is therefore £20,800.
- The average weekly fee across Scotland for this foster carer is £145.30.

	Fee	Total annual income from fees
Highest (East Dunbartonshire)	£200 x 2 = £400	£20,800
Lowest (multiple)	£0	£0

6.5 Scenario 2

This scenario is a foster carer on the highest mainstream band, with one child aged 16 in placement. Some fostering services have specialist or advanced schemes (for example for children with high needs) that pay significantly more than the figures below. For the purposes of this comparison we are concerned only with mainstream pay bands open to foster carers looking after children of all ages.

- Every local authority except one (East Ayrshire) pays a separate fee for this foster carer.
- The highest weekly fee they would receive is £413.22, in the Shetland Islands.
- The lowest weekly fee they would receive is £0, in East Ayrshire.
- The average weekly fee across Scotland for this foster carer is £219.41.
- The maximum difference in total annual income between two similar foster carers in different parts of Scotland is £21487.44.

	Fee	Total annual income
Highest (Shetland Islands)	£413.22	£21487.44
Lowest (East Ayrshire)	£0	£0

7. Conclusion and recommendations

The results of this survey demonstrate the financial pressures facing foster carers across Scotland.

The Government should introduce a national minimum allowance for foster carers at the earliest opportunity.

All foster carers should be paid for their time, skills, and experience, in addition to receiving an allowance that fully covers expenses. It is a matter of social justice that foster carers should be properly remunerated. But it's also a matter of economics - money spent supporting fostering and foster carers now will save society significantly more money in the future.

All fostering households should receive the equivalent of the national living wage for a notional 40-hour week, paid 52 weeks a year, including holiday and sick pay. In the longer term we believe that foster carers should be paid in line with residential care workers, starting at around £20,000.

This research has shown that Continuing Care payments leave foster carers facing a drop in income if they wish to continue to offer a home to a care leaver.

Continuing Care allowances vary greatly by local authority. Foster carers' income can reduce dramatically when they move to support young people under Continuing Care arrangements even though their input can stay at the same level or sometimes increase when they are supporting the young person to make the transition to independence. Foster carers often find themselves in the position of having to make a decision to continue supporting a young person who has been part of their family for many years against losing a significant proportion of their income.

The Government should introduce a national Continuing Care allowance, which covers the full cost of looking after a young person.

About The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

We work to ensure all fostered children and young people experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

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