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This report has been produced to mark the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the office of the Fostering Network in Wales.

It has been an exciting, but at times frustrating, 10 years for us. Like others working in our field, we want to improve the lives of looked-after children, and we do this by improving foster care.

We are very proud of our achievements, which include:

- The success of our campaigning, for example with the Welsh Government setting national fostering allowances.
- The recognition of the support needs of foster carers through the introduction of the induction standards.
- A “top ten tips” guide written by sons and daughters of foster carers on how to engage with them.
- The recognition of children’s feelings when they change placements with the high profile *This is not a suitcase* campaign.
- The regular production of *Thrive* magazine for looked-after young people on topics including bullying, nutrition and higher education.
- The recognition of the often overlooked and incalculable contribution of male foster carers with the publication of *Men who Care*.
- The production of resources for a range of professionals who work to improve fostered children’s lives including *Ready Steady Care*, a nutrition training pack; and *Amy’s Diary* to inform professionals of the reality of life for a looked-after child.

The list could continue, but this report does not focus on the work of the Fostering Network Wales, rather on the main issues of concern to foster carers and other professionals working towards supporting looked-after children.

We know fostering can change children’s lives, and can help them to overcome the difficulties that lead to them coming into care.

I think Ben, a looked-after young man, can sum it up much better than I ever could:

“*My foster carers are great people, they have helped me to get back into school and get involved in sport. Mind you, being a foster carer isn’t a walk in the park.*”

Over the next 10 years and beyond, the Fostering Network Wales will continue to work hard to make this walk in the park easier, more enjoyable and more successful.

Freda Lewis  
*Director of the Fostering Network Wales*  
December 2012
Introduction

The data that inform this report primarily come from:

- The Fostering Network’s 2003 report on foster care in Wales, *Fit to Foster?*
- The 2012 Fostering Network survey of foster carers in Wales. The questions referred to in the text and in graphs, and most of the quotes from foster carers in the body of the report are from this survey, unless otherwise stated. The full results can be found in the appendix.
- Welsh results of the 2012 Fostering Network survey of foster carers on delegated authority, *Like Everyone Else*. The full UK report is available from the Fostering Network’s website.
- Welsh Government national statistics on looked-after children.

Each chapter examines a different issue affecting foster care in Wales. The purpose of the report is to provide a snapshot of fostering in Wales in 2012 and how it has changed over the past decade, to highlight the issues, often accompanied with stories from foster carers themselves, and recommend improvements.
Summary of Recommendations

Recruitment and retention (chapters 2 and 8)

• Local authorities should undertake a needs analysis that informs their strategies for securing sufficient placements for looked-after children in their authority.

• Develop targeted campaigns to recruit the types of foster carers that are needed, for example those suitable to care for teenagers, sibling groups, or children with a disability.

• Invite existing foster carers to take an active role within recruitment campaigns. Word of mouth is consistently one of the most common methods of recruiting new foster carers.

Foster carer finance (chapter 3)

• The Welsh Government should ensure that foster care allowances keep pace each year with the rate of inflation.

• Foster carers should be paid a fee for 52 weeks of the year when available for placement or offering other services (such as support to looked-after children in school, mentoring a new foster carer), and paid at levels that are comparable with children’s residential social workers.

• Foster carers in Wales who are adversely affected by the housing benefit under-occupancy rules should have their eligibility for the discretionary fund confirmed as soon as possible.

Training (chapter 4)

• Fostering services should offer paid respite to enable more foster carers to take part in training.

• Induction standards for foster carers should be made mandatory in Wales.
Summary of Recommendations

Support (chapter 5)

- All foster carers should receive good quality information about placements promptly, preferably before they commence.
- Communication should be improved by including foster carers in all relevant meetings, and supporting foster carers to meet with each other.
- Planning for post-16 provision needs to start early.

Allegations and complaints procedures (chapter 6)

- The 2011 Welsh Government toolkit, Dealing with Allegations, must be used more widely, and independent support offered throughout the process.
- During allegation and complaints processes, foster carers must not be financially disadvantaged, and rather than removing all other placements immediately, a risk assessment should be undertaken – and shared with foster carers if possible.
- Multi-agency action plans should be implemented.

Delegated authority (chapter 7)

- All fostering services should implement the 2010 Welsh Government guidance on delegated authority.
- There should be a presumption in favour of delegating day-to-day decisions to foster carers.
- It must be recognised within children’s services that delegating more authority to the foster carer is a positive step as by reducing bureaucracy it frees up time for social workers, and supports the children’s rights agenda.
- Local authorities should consult with children and young people in care and foster carers on their delegated authority policies.
Over the last 10 years the number of looked-after children in Wales has risen each year, to an all-time high of 5,725 in 2012. The proportion of those in foster care has increased to 77 per cent, compared with 71 per cent in 2003.

In 2010 there was a slightly larger than usual rise in the number of looked-after children, which went up nearly 12 per cent on the previous year. It is widely acknowledged that this is due to the Baby P case triggering a greater alertness among social workers, leading to more at-risk children being placed in care. The trend continued in 2012, with an increase of over six per cent on the previous year\(^1\).

Many services were unprepared for the rise of children coming into care, and with some having a three-year budget cycle, they faced resource challenges in terms of budgets and staffing. Over two-thirds of services reported costs being higher than budgeted for in 2009-10\(^2\).


\(^2\) The Fostering Network (2010), *Bursting at the Seams* p.6
Prior to these unprecedented levels of children going into care, fostering services were making real progress in recruiting more foster carers, but the challenging rises mean that some children are being moved far away from their support networks. Some local authorities report that finding suitable local homes for foster children is now harder than it has ever been.

FINDINGS

Of those children that are fostered, the proportion of children placed with foster carers from independent fostering providers has increased significantly from one in 10 in 2003 to nearly a third in 2012. Family and friends placements have remained roughly constant as a proportion of the total fostered.

1 Bursted at the Seams, p.7
SUCCESS

It is great news that more foster carers have been recruited over the past decade. However, this rate of increase must continue to keep up with the corresponding rise in looked-after children.

The Fostering Network estimates that in Wales, 550 more foster families are needed to meet the needs of children in care in the next year alone. Over the last nine years, the number of foster carers has risen by 33 per cent while the number of children in foster care has gone up by nearly 45 per cent. In the last two years, the number of children in foster care has been at its highest in the last decade, and is still rising faster than the increase in foster carers.

\(^4\) http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2002/120927
The past decade has also seen the average age of foster carers increase – a trend that is UK-wide. In 2003 49 per cent of foster carers in Wales were over 50. In 2012 those above 50 had risen to 55 per cent. 13.5 per cent are over 60, compared to 11.5 per cent 10 years previously.

However the biggest change is in the 30-39 age group, which has declined sharply from 15 per cent to five per cent.

**CHALLENGES**

These figures demonstrate an urgent need to attract more, particularly younger, people into becoming foster carers. The lack of appropriate capacity can lead to children being moved around between foster carers while a suitable match is found, or siblings being split up from one another.

**RECOMMENDATIONS for fostering services:**

- Local authorities should undertake a needs analysis that informs their strategies for securing sufficient placements for looked-after children in their authority.
- Develop targeted campaigns to recruit the types of foster carers that are needed, for example those suitable to care for teenagers, sibling groups, or children with a disability.
- Invite existing foster carers to take an active role within recruitment campaigns. Word of mouth is consistently one of the most common methods of recruiting new foster carers.
The financial arrangements that support foster carers can be split into three categories. *Allowances*, which are intended to cover the cost to the foster carer of fostering the child; *payments or fees*, in recognition of the time, skills and commitment of foster carers; and finally *tax and benefits*, which cover how the tax and benefit system impacts on foster carers.

### 3.1 Allowances

The purpose of the fostering allowance is to meet the cost of looking after the fostered child. This is distinct from payments made to some foster carers as a fee for their time (see 3.2).

10 years ago there was much uncertainty about how much foster carers were given to meet these costs. Local authorities could reimburse additional expenses, but some of these were discretionary and foster carers were not always provided with clear guidelines. There was also disparity between foster carers receiving the highest and lowest allowances to cover costs.

#### SUCCESS

In April 2011, after years of campaigning led by the Fostering Network, the Welsh Government set national minimum allowances for foster carers in Wales for the first time, and set out the rates for the next three years.

The national minimum allowance in Wales has made a big difference. In 2012 all but one of the local authorities in Wales were paying the Government’s rate, and the only one that had yet to catch up was about to embark on a review – with the outcome likely to be falling in line with the national rate.

#### CHALLENGE

Further local government cuts are likely, and these could impact on future allowance rates once the initial three years are up.

#### RECOMMENDATION

The Welsh Government should ensure that foster care allowances keep pace each year with the rate of inflation.

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\(^5\) *The Fostering Network 2002 Survey of Allowances.* Adjusted to 2012 prices, the 2002 figure is £82.08.

\(^6\) *The Fostering Network (2003)* *Fit to Foster*, p. 35.
3.2 Pay

“Payment is only provided when I have a placement. I get nothing if there are no children placed, which can make it difficult financially to maintain standards in the home.”

The success of the allowances campaign in Wales contrasts with continued poor levels of pay. Despite fostering being a highly demanding job both in terms of time and emotion, there are no national pay scales, recommended fee levels or even requirements to make payments\(^7\). Under employment law, individuals that have employed or worker status are entitled to a minimum wage, paid holidays and other rights. Most foster carers do not have this status, and many receive no fees, or may receive fee payments below the level of the minimum wage. Yet foster care is a 24 hours a day, seven days a week commitment. As a result of this, foster carers can feel exploited and under-valued.

In 2006, a report by the Fostering Network discovered that 81 per cent of foster carers in Wales received less than the equivalent of the national minimum wage (NMW) for a 40-hour week, and that Wales was the worst off for payments in the UK as a whole.

Research in 2010 showed that 65 per cent of foster carers think that their fostering income is not sufficient for the job they do, while 36 per cent of them seriously considered giving up fostering because fee payments were too low to provide a living wage\(^8\).

Over the past decade the Fostering Network in Wales has been campaigning for better pay and recognition for foster carers. From looking at the figures it is clear that progress is being made but that there is still a lot more work to be done.

In 2003 it was unusual for foster carers to be paid a fee for their work (separate from their allowances) in Wales. While 16 out of 22 local authorities had a pay scheme, it was unlikely to be available to all foster carers, and the payment started at £50 per week\(^9\).

\(^8\)*Love Fostering – Need Pay*, p.8
\(^9\)*Fit to Foster*, p. 35
There had been improvement by 2012: 19 out of 22 local authorities have a pay scheme. However, five of these schemes pay nothing to newly approved foster carers.

**Q9. In addition to your fostering allowance, do you receive a payment?**

![Pie chart showing 53% Yes, 47% No]

Just over half of foster carers surveyed in 2012 reported that they are paid a fee; the average weekly payment received is £198. However, 81 per cent of them do not get any kind of retainer fee in between placements, and 76 per cent get less than the equivalent of the national minimum wage for a 40 hour week.

The situation is further complicated by some fostering services providing a single payment that is not broken down into its fee or allowance component. Despite the introduction of the Welsh Government’s minimum fostering allowance, comments from foster carers in 2012 suggested that some fostering services are using the national minimum allowance as a cover for not paying their carers a fair fee.

“I receive a payment but have recently been told it has to be spent on the child.”

**CHALLENGES**

Three fostering services do not have a payment scheme, and some do not break down the payments they make to foster carers clearly into payments and allowances.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Foster carers should be paid a fee for 52 weeks of the year when available for placement or offering other services (e.g. support to looked after children in school, mentoring a new foster carer, etc.), and paid at levels that are comparable with children’s residential social workers.
3.3 Tax and benefits

SUCCESS
In 2008 the Fostering Network secured an income tax exemption for foster carers from the UK Government. The foster care tax relief scheme provides a tax threshold of £10,000, plus an additional £200-£250 per child per week to each fostering household.

The economic climate has changed significantly in the past 10 years. In 2008 the UK entered recession, with the result that in 2012 the output of the economy was 10 per cent lower than it was four years earlier\(^\text{10}\). The economic downturn has prompted budget cuts at national and local levels, which have the potential to affect foster carers.

New welfare legislation\(^\text{11}\) will mean that housing benefit will no longer cover rooms occupied by fostered children in social accommodation from April 2013. However, the Fostering Network successfully campaigned to ensure that £5 million will be added to the discretionary housing fund to ensure that this will be made available for foster carers to maintain spare bedrooms for fostered children. However, it is unclear at present how this will affect foster carers in Wales.

CHALLENGE
To ensure that local authorities throughout Wales are aware of, and use the discretionary housing benefit fund appropriately.

RECOMMENDATION
Foster carers in Wales who are adversely affected by the housing benefit under-occupancy rules should have their eligibility for the discretionary fund confirmed as soon as possible.

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\(^{10}\) www.bbc.co.uk/news/10613201

\(^{11}\) Welfare Reform Act 2012
In 2011 the Care Council for Wales introduced induction standards for foster carers, something that the Fostering Network had campaigned on for some time. However, unlike some other parts of the UK, it is not currently compulsory for foster carers to attain the standards in Wales.

Nevertheless, Wales has a far better trained foster care workforce than it did 10 years ago. The number of foster carers receiving training has jumped from just over half in 2003 to 93 per cent in 2012.

All foster carers working for independent fostering providers had attended training in the past year.

Q12. Have you attended training in the past year?

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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Of those that have taken part in training, many more have, or are working towards, an NVQ level 3 in foster care, which is the standard qualification for foster carers.

However, finding the time between foster care commitments to dedicate to training remains a key barrier for some Welsh foster carers.

**Q13. Have you got NVQ level 3 or equivalent in foster care?**

![Bar chart showing the percentage of foster carers with NVQ level 3 or equivalent](chart.png)

**CHALLENGES**

Budgetary and time pressures on fostering services preventing them from making training realistically available to all foster carers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Fostering services should offer paid respite to enable more foster carers to take part in training.
- Induction standards for foster carers should be made mandatory in Wales.
“Support” from the fostering service is a very broad term, and respondents to the 2012 survey offered the following definitions.

- Good communication from social workers
- Adequate information sharing about placements
- Provision of respite care
- Involvement in decision making
- Support through allegation and complaint procedures
- Being offered regular and appropriate training
- Financial support
- Being considered, and treated as, part of the wider child care team

There is a link between how well supported a foster carer feels and the success of the placement. Over the past decade this is one area where there has not been any significant progress – with only a slight rise in reported placement breakdowns.

- Reported placement breakdowns have increased slightly from 20 per cent in 2003 to 24 per cent in 2012.
- In 2003 most foster carers who had experienced a placement breakdown believed that it could have been prevented if the fostering service had offered more support and had been better at matching children with foster carers.\(^\text{12}\)
- In 2012, one third of foster carers felt that they had had a child placed with them recently that they did not feel fully equipped to care for.
- In 2012, nearly two-thirds of foster carers felt that most of their placements did not go as planned and that they did not receive adequate information prior to placements.

The importance of a good relationship with the fostering service came out in many of the comments received in 2012, for example:

“I work hard at maintaining placements in order that they do not break down, however I do have a good working relationship with school’s social workers, and get good support from the family placement social worker.”

\(^{12}\) Fit to Foster, p. 22
Q.17 In the past three years, have you had children placed with you who you did not feel fully equipped to care for?

34% Yes  
66% No

Most of those who replied “yes” to Q.17 reported that either the child was not in their preferred age range or that they were initially unfamiliar with their religious needs. Some foster carers also commented that they were not made aware that the child had made previous unfounded allegations against former foster carers.

Two-thirds of foster carers said placements were rarely/never, or only sometimes “planned”. A similar two-thirds of foster carers did not always have adequate information about a child prior to placement (Q.19).

Q18. Would you describe placements as “planned”?

23% Rarely / Never  
40% Sometimes  
30% Usually  
7% Always
These similar statistics could suggest that if a foster carer is given all the information about the placement at the beginning, it could help them to plan better for a successful outcome.

Some of the comments received in 2012 demonstrated that lack of information can have very serious implications. A number of foster carers noted that information about previous violent and sexual behaviours had been withheld from them.

The changing financial climate over the past 10 years has also not gone unnoticed: comments about breakdowns received in 2012 showed that foster carers are aware of the impact this can have on the level of support they receive, particularly when it comes to care leavers. For example:

“ The child reached 18 and was moved on the week of his birthday by the fostering service, despite having been four years in placement and being happy. They tried to force us into supported lodgings, despite the care plan saying he was not ready. This is happening a lot now that accountants are making care plans rather than social workers... All these placements break down within months because after care is shocking and no real pathway plans are made.”

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- All foster carers should receive good quality information about children promptly, preferably before they move in.
- Communication can be improved by including foster carers in all relevant meetings, and supporting them to meet with each other.
- Planning for post-16 provision needs to start early.
It is an unfortunate fact that many foster carers will have an allegation made against them during their time as foster carers. Allegations are very distressing for foster carers and their families, and it is important that robust procedures are in place to ensure that the process is as smooth and transparent as possible.

However, despite the existence of the toolkit, the experiences recounted by Welsh foster carers in the 2012 survey on this subject were generally negative. For example:

“No support from agency, unhelpful when requesting information, saying ’not at liberty to give information’ or ’it’s not our information to give’, but not offering advice on what I should do to get information.”

Our 2012 survey showed a significant increase in the number of allegations and complaints over the past decade: they were now 25 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. Satisfaction with the manner in which the allegation was handled by the fostering service had improved (to 68 per cent in 2012), but this increased satisfaction did not carry over into complaints procedures, which saw a drop to 24 per cent over the same period.

Q14. Have you ever had an allegation or a complaint made against you?

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It is a success story of the last 10 years in Wales that satisfaction with how allegations were dealt with has increased, but concerning that a similar rise has not been seen with complaints procedures.

Q15. If yes, were you satisfied with how your fostering service managed the allegation or complaint?

From the results of the 2012 survey and continued dialogue with foster carers in Wales on the subject, particularly through Fosterline Wales, it is clear that more needs to be done to ensure that the difficult allegation and complaints process runs as smoothly as possible.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The 2011 Welsh Government toolkit, Dealing with Allegations, must be used more widely, and independent support offered throughout the process.
- During allegation and complaints processes, foster carers must not be financially disadvantaged, and rather than removing all other fostered children immediately, a risk assessment should be undertaken – and shared with foster carers if possible.
- Multi-agency action plans should be implemented.
The issue of delegated authority was not explicitly explored in the 2003 survey, and therefore comparisons are not possible with 2012.

However, in 2012 the Fostering Network undertook a UK-wide survey of foster carers on the subject of delegated authority, which looked at changes over the past two years. There were 136 respondents from Wales, and the data is represented in the graphs in this chapter. It is worrying that 60 per cent of foster carers felt that the level of authority had stayed the same or lessened over the past two years. When looking at such everyday decisions as haircuts, one-fifth of foster carers reported that they never have such authority.

Has the level of authority changed in the past two years?

- **28%** More authority
- **7%** Less authority
- **53%** Stayed the same
- **10%** Don’t know
- **3%** N/A

“They should be made to feel more involved in decisions about the child and feel part of a team. You are treated as ‘just the foster carer’.”

Children and young people need to be supported in understanding how to make decisions safely. Part of being a good parent is showing children how to make good decisions, which also supports the children’s rights agenda.

SUCCESS

In 2010, in response to pressure from the Fostering Network, the Welsh Government wrote to all fostering services recommending that foster carers be given the power to make more everyday decisions for the children and young people they care for. This was a great campaign success, but things have not improved fast enough.
The Fostering Network Wales has heard many stories from children and young people about how they feel disadvantaged by this lack of delegated authority for their foster carers. Here are just two examples.

Stacey, aged 15, had been living with her fostering family for three years, and wanted to forge a career in the RAF. She had been attending air cadets for over two years, but her foster carer could not sign permission forms for Stacey to take part in activities, meaning she often missed out if the social worker couldn’t sign the forms in time.

Jo and Tim, aged 14 and 15, live with a fostering family. But because each is looked after by a different local authority the foster carers have different levels of delegated authority. They can sign for Jo to spend up to three nights away but they cannot sign for Tim to even go on a school day trip. This creates a sense of division in the home, and the whole family feels frustrated and let down by the situation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- All fostering services should implement the 2010 Welsh Government guidance on delegated authority.
- There should be a presumption in favour of delegating day-to-day decisions to foster carers.
- It must be recognised within children’s services that delegating more authority to the foster carer is a positive step as by reducing bureaucracy it frees up time for social workers, and supports the children’s rights agenda.
- Local authorities should consult with children and young people in care and foster carers on their delegated authority policies.
We know there is a recruitment crisis in foster care in Wales: 550 new foster families are needed to cope with the demand in the next 12 months. Over the past 10 years, foster carers’ perceptions of how to improve recruitment have changed drastically. Allowances and support have become less prominent, while feeling part of a professional team has become the overwhelming number one theme.

Another significant theme, as far as recruitment is concerned, is the need to be honest – for example by using foster carers as ambassadors to tell real life stories about their work. It is clear that current foster carers believe that by not shying away from the difficulties, while emphasising the great positives of fostering, more people can be recruited.

These themes carried over into retention as well.

**2003: top three ways to retain more foster carers:**
1. Better support
2. Improved financial support
3. Better communication and honesty

**2012: top three ways to retain more foster carers:**
1. Better support
2. Professional payment and pensions
3. Regular respite
A selection of comments from foster carers in 2012 follows.

**Recruitment**

- Positive publicity about outcomes for looked-after children. Care is a positive outcome for the majority of looked-after children.
- Currently about five people we know who were considering fostering have decided against it because of the way we are being treated by our local authority. This is sad: some of them would be excellent. I think local authorities need to show that they value professionalism in their foster carers, even when it’s uncomfortable for them. This would show how foster carers are valued.
- Provide better information about who can foster. A lot of people still think they have to be married or own their own home etc.

**How could more people be encouraged to become foster carers?**

- **44%** Improve pay & professionalism
- **18%** Use foster carers as ambassadors
- **11%** Be honest about negatives
- **8%** Word of mouth
- **6%** Emphasise the positives
- **5%** Less bureaucracy
- **5%** Radio / TV adverts
- **3%** Privatise foster care
Retention

How could more people be encouraged to continue to foster for longer?

- **53%** More support and respect from fostering service
- **18%** Professional payment / pensions
- **11%** Regular respite
- **8%** Being included in decision-making process
- **6%** Better forward planning
- **5%** Less paperwork

“Carers should be made to feel that they are important to the department and that the care that they give is recognised and appreciated. They should not be immediately blamed when things go wrong.”

“Unless there is firm evidence that they have done something unacceptable, foster carers should be supported during tough investigations, and recommendations should be made on fact not supposition. Also the recommendation of the supervising social worker should take precedence over the manager – who in most cases will not even know the carer.”

“The government must support foster carers to save for retirement. I’m 47 and have no private pension. It has taken me years to pay off the large mortgage I had to buy a house suitable with spare rooms to foster in the first place. Now I feel punished. High water rates, high council tax. No employer to boost my contributions because we’re classed as self-employed. We all know how expensive it is getting to heat our homes, and I’m sitting here in a five bed home with one child. I don’t know where I’m supposed to find the money to save anything.”
Foster carers’ views on the best and worst parts of fostering

In 2003, the best reported aspects of foster care were usually personal, and were connected with the development of the child. For example:

“Giving the children the belief they are worthy of love & care.”

“Excitement when they achieve something they didn’t expect to.”

In 2012, these hadn’t changed much: a large number of the positive comments reflected the positive experiences of helping children and young people.

As touched upon in chapter five looking at support, this year there was a greater appreciation that they were part of a team in the wider fostering service. For example:

“I have had a positive experience fostering and have always felt supported and listened to.”

“The whole team are approachable and helpful. Someone is always available when needed.”

In 2003 support was one of the most important issues to foster carers and opinion was fairly evenly divided about whether it was one of the best or worst things. 10 years later and little has changed, as both of these charts show.

What is the best thing about fostering for your fostering service?

49% Feeling part of a team
31% Helping children
17% Training
3% Pay / allowances

14 Fit to Foster, p.41
What is the worst thing about fostering for your fostering service?

- **37%** Lack of support
- **30%** Communication problems
- **14%** Poorly managed service
- **7%** Lack of placements
- **4%** Travel time / costs
- **5%** Poor financial support
- **3%** Lack of respite

However, the big difference in 2012 was that a lack of support was often couched in terms of not being treated as a professional. While this frustration is far from ideal, it is perhaps indicative of a change in attitude over the past decade. Foster carers are now self-identifying as part of the child care team, and they expect to be treated as such, as the comments we received demonstrate:

“Never being given all the facts in first discussions about children - it would be more beneficial to have all the cards on the table from the start.”

“Foster carers can have an opinion but it rarely counts. One child I have is being sent to a special school because of behaviour which has improved tenfold since being in care. He is bright and has lots of potential for GCSE, but the school had only one pupil sit one GCSE last year - in art! I wouldn’t have allowed my own child to go there, but had no choice with foster child.”
The information and issues raised in this report should stimulate debate about the future of foster care in Wales, and the Fostering Network will be campaigning on the recommendations identified. The report shows that there have been some important successes in fostering, particularly on allowances and delegated authority guidance. It also highlights that much more still needs to be done to ensure that foster care works for every fostered child and every foster family.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with policy makers, fostering service providers, foster carers and young people to continue to improve the lives of children and young people in foster care in Wales. For more information about any of these issues, contact campaigns@fostering.net.

Robert Cann
Campaigns Officer
December 2012
## Results of the Fostering Network Wales survey 2012

**Total respondents: 113.**

### Q1. Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q2. Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q3. Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/cohabiting</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q4. What type of fostering service do you foster for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent fostering provider</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Q5.** How long have you been an approved foster carer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q6.** If you have been fostering for ten years or more, has support (practical and financial) and training offered to foster carers improved in that time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q7.** What is your annual household income? Please include fee payments from fostering, additional salaries, pensions, investments and benefits (exclude foster care allowances).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than £10,000</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£11,000 to £20,000</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£21,000 to £30,000</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£31,000 to £40,000</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£41,000 to £50,000</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£51,000 to £60,000</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than £61,000</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q8.** Any additional comments (open ended response)

**Q9.** In addition to your fostering allowance, do you receive a payment?
Payments are a wage, fee or reward for your work as a foster carer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Q10.** What is your current weekly fee? (open ended response)

**Q11.** Is your fee paid all year round, including when you do not have a placement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q12.** Have you attended foster care related training in the past year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q13.** Have you got NVQ level 3 or equivalent in foster care?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working towards it</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q14.** Have you ever had an allegation or complaint made against you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allegation (Yes / No)</td>
<td>25.3% / 74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint (Yes / No)</td>
<td>23.1% / 76.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q15.** If yes were you satisfied with how your fostering service managed the allegation or complaint?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allegation (Yes / No)</td>
<td>68.0% / 32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint (Yes / No)</td>
<td>23.8% / 76.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Q16.** Any additional comments *(open ended response)*

**Q17.** In the past three years, have you had children placed with you who you do not feel fully equipped to care for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q18.** Would you describe placements as planned?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/never</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q19.** Do you have adequate information, including fully completed paperwork, about the child or young person before placement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/never</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q20.** Have you discovered that important information about a young person has been withheld from you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix

Q21. Do you feel involved in any decision making with regards to the children placed with you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q22. Do you feel that you have the authority to make decisions about your child’s day-to-day care? (e.g. haircuts, school trips, sleepovers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q23. In the past year (since March 2011) have you had a placement breakdown?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q24. What is the best thing about fostering for your fostering service? (open ended response)

Q25. What is the worst thing about fostering for your fostering service? (open ended response)

Q26. How could more people be encouraged to become foster carers? (open ended response)

Q27. How could people be encouraged to continue fostering for longer? (open ended response)

Q28. Please use this space to expand on any parts of the questionnaire or to add any additional comments you would like to make. (open ended response)

Thanks to Sarah Argles for writing & designing the survey that lead to this report.