



England Foster Care Allowances Survey 2018-19: 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 foster carers receive a weekly fostering allowance which is designed to cover the cost of caring for a fostered child. This includes food, clothes, toiletries, travel and all other expenses incurred. The Department for Education (DfE) publishes National Minimum Maintenance Allowances for foster carers, with the expectation that all fostering services meet these amounts.

3. About this report

In the summer of 2018 The Fostering Network conducted a survey of 28 local authorities in England. In previous years we have surveyed all 150 local authorities, but this year we chose to focus only on those who had either paid below the DfE national minimum allowance last year, or had done so in the past five years. The majority of the data came from sending Freedom of Information requests (Fols). The wording of the Fol was as follows:

Please could you tell me your 2018-19 weekly foster care allowances for all age bands, NOT including any fee/reward element for foster carers?

4. Survey of foster care allowances 2018-19: Summary

4.1 Overview

The DfE's recommended rates for 2018-19 were an increase of approximately 1.5 per cent over the previous year. Results of the survey implied that 9 out of the 28 local authority fostering services who shared data are paying less than the DfE rate in at least one age category in 2018-19. Last year, 17 fostering service fell below. The results are shown in the following table.

4.2 Local Authority fostering services allowances in 2018-19

Those paying below DfE rates are marked in **red**

Local authority	Amount paid (0-4)	Amount paid (5-10)	Amount paid (11-15)	Amount paid (16+)
DfE England	£127-£130	£143	£164	£191
Birmingham	£127.58	£145.31	£180.91	£219.65
Bournemouth	£124.12 – 128	£146.86	£183.87	£189.36-£174.36
Calderdale	£127 – £130	£143	£164	£191
Dorset	£146	£168	£208	£252
Gloucestershire	£130.06	£143.01	£164.01	£191.03
Herefordshire	£117.00	£127.5	£182.5	£218
Liverpool	£130.10-£133.27	£149.4	£178.49	£215.51
Norfolk	£135	£149	£170	£198
North Somerset	£134	£147	£169	£197
Northumberland	£130.06	£144.69	£180.04	£219.03
Nottingham	£130	£144	£168	£195
Oldham	£125.09	£142.52	£177.38	£215.74
Poole	£127 – £130	£143	£164	£191
Rochdale	£127 – £130	£143	£164	£191
Sheffield	£130	£143	£164	£191
St Helens	£125.08	£142.49	£177.38	£215.75
Tameside	£127 – £130	£143	£164	£191
Warrington	£125.09	£142.52	£177.38	£215.74
Wigan	£195 – £198	£211	£231	£257
York	£130.06	£143.01	£164.01	£191.03
DfE South East	£140 - £144	£160	£182	£214
East Sussex	£122.89	£139.98	£174.26	£174.26
Isle of Wight	£144.43	£164.52	£204.81	£249.15
DfE London	£146 - £149	£168	£190	£222
Bromley	£149.10	£168	£190.12	£222.04
Enfield	£163	£163	£216	£216
Greenwich	£146 – £149	£168	£190	£222
Harrow	£200	£200	£250	£250
Lewisham	£144 – £147	£165	£187	£219
Sutton	£146 – £149	£168	£190	£222

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 The results of this survey demonstrate the financial pressures facing foster carers across England. The DfE allowance is an essential tool to enable fostering services to offer a basic level of support for their foster carers' costs, and it is unacceptable that any local authority pays less than this Government minimum.

5.2 Recommendations for the Westminster Government:

- a) The Government should review the level of the national minimum maintenance allowance for foster carers.**
- b) All fostering services should be required to pay an allowance at a level that meets or exceeds the DfE's national minimum maintenance allowance for foster carers.**

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