



Scotland 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 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 has been consulting on this as part of their review of allowances during 2018.

3. About this report

In the autumn of 2018 The Fostering Network conducted a survey of all 32 local authorities in Scotland, using web research and freedom of information requests (FoI), in order to get a picture of fostering income for local authority foster carers across the country. The wording of the FoI, which was used when up-to-date allowances information was absent from local authority websites, 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: Scotland Summary

4.1 We asked local authorities for the foster care allowances for all age bands.

Key Findings

- 16 local authorities lacked clear information about 2018-19 allowances on their websites, despite having been requested to do so by the Scottish Government by 1 November 2015¹. Therefore these 16 local authorities received FoI requests
- The survey found that allowances for 0 – 4 year olds vary from £77.69 to £200 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 £122.31 per week: £6,360.12 over the course of a year
- Allowances for 5 – 10 year olds vary between local authorities by as much as £103.60 per week: £5,387.20 over the course of a year
- Allowances for 11 – 15 year olds vary between local authorities by as much as £115.71 per week: £6,016.92 over the course of a year
- Allowances for 16+ year olds vary between local authorities by as much as £145.11 per week: £7,545.72 over the course of a year
- Nearly all (30 out of 32) Scottish local authorities pay less than the Welsh Government's national minimum allowance in at least one age category
- One third of Scottish local authorities (11 out of 32) pay less than the national minimum allowance rate in England in at least one age category
- Three quarters of local authorities (24 out of 32) froze their fostering allowances this year, an increase of 4 over 2017-18.

¹ "...local authorities should publish their current foster care rates by 1 November (2015) at the latest. This is necessary to ensure that parity of allowances is clear and transparent for all parties." <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/protecting/lac/kinship/Q/editmode/on/forceupdate/on>

4.2 Full results of 2018-19 Scotland Survey of Allowances

Red denotes frozen allowances compared with last year.

Highlighted rates are lower than the Welsh Government rate in Wales.

Rates marked with an asterisk* are lower than the DfE national minimum allowance in England.

Local authority	0 - 4	5 - 10	11 - 15	16+
England National Minimum	£127 - £130 11 below	£143 9 below	£164 6 below	£191 6 below
Wales National Minimum	£175 30 below	£159 22 below	£159 6 below	£199 7 below
Aberdeen City	£131.47	£149.75	£186.43	£226.75
Aberdeenshire	£145.72	£165.99	£206.64	£251.38
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	£157.56	£157.56	£196.25	£238.75
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	£104.47*	£127.21*	£158.36-162.78*	£195.35
Falkirk	£137.18	£156.26	£194.53	£226.84
Fife	£95.56*	£107.96*	£133.99*	£171.24*
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	£200.00	£200.00	£200.00	£200.00
North Lanarkshire	£142.82	£162.69	£202.51	£246.33
Orkney Islands	£142.86	£162.73	£202.58	£246.44
Perth & Kinross	£134.47	£153.16	£190.68	£231.91
Renfrewshire	£108.79*	£108.79*	£108.79*	£108.79*
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	£110.60*	£137.26*	£170.78-170.75	£221.18

5 Conclusion and recommendations

We know that there is concern across Scotland that allowances do not always cover the costs of foster care. In 2018 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: **60 per cent** of them said no.

After many years of campaigning from The Fostering Network, and broken promises from the Scottish Government dating back 10 years, during 2018 a national review of care allowances took place in Scotland, which we hoped would finally set the ball rolling to introduce a minimum allowance. Unfortunately the review group failed in its remit, and said only in its conclusion that 'the Scottish Government and COSLA should consider a Scottish Recommended Allowance'. This represents little more than stasis and indecision.

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.

Recommendation for the Scottish Government:

The Scottish Government's stated ambition is to 'make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up' - in order to achieve this, it is vital to ensure that fostered children do not receive different standards of care depending on where in Scotland they live. **A national minimum allowance must be introduced at the earliest opportunity.**

About The Fostering Network

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