



## **Wales 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 Welsh Government 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 all 22 local authorities in Wales, using freedom of information requests (Fol), in order to get a picture of fostering allowance income across the country. The wording of the Fol was as follows:

*1) 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?*

*2) Please could you tell me your 2018-19 weekly allowances to former foster carers looking after young people in When I am Ready 18+ arrangements, broken down by year 1, year 2, and year 3+ if necessary?*

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

### 4.1 Overview

The Welsh Government's recommended rates for 2018-19 were an increase of approximately 2.5 - 3 per cent over the previous year. Results of the survey implied that all 22 local authority fostering services in Wales increased their payments in line with the Welsh Government or are already paying at or above the minimum. The results are shown in the following table.

### 4.2 Local Authority fostering services allowances in 2018-19

Local authority	Amount paid (0-4)	Amount paid (5-10)	Amount paid (11-15)	Amount paid (16+)
<b>Welsh Government</b>	<b>£175</b>	<b>£159</b>	<b>£159</b>	<b>£199</b>
Blaenau Gwent	£175	£159	£177.38	£215.74
Bridgend	£175	£159	£177.38	£224.37
Caerphilly	£175	£159	£159	£199
Cardiff	£175	£159	£181.81	£221.13
Carmarthenshire	£175	£175	£175	£200
Ceredigion	£175	£159	£177.38	£215.74
Conwy	£175	£159	£182	£199
Denbighshire	£175	£159	£159	£199
Flintshire	£175	£159	£179.15	£217.90
Gwynedd	£175	£159	£181.81	£221.13
Isle Of Anglesey	£175	£159	£179.78	£218.16
Merthyr Tydfil	£175	£159	£182	£199
Monmouthshire	£216	£174	£174	£223
Neath Port Talbot	£175	£159	£159	£199
Newport	£175	£159	£159	£199
Pembrokeshire	£175	£159	£177.38	£215.42
Powys	£232.34	£232.34	£232.34	£232.34
Rhondda Cynon Taff	£175	£159	£159	£199
Swansea	£175	£159	£199	£199
Torfaen County	£175.00	£159.00	£168.50	£209.30

<b>Vale Of Glamorgan</b>	£175	£159	£159	£199
<b>Wrexham</b>	£175.07	£159.04	£177.38	£215.74

## **5. Survey of When I am Ready payments: Wales 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 When I am Ready. In this way we could estimate what proportion of foster carers may be required to accept a drop in financial support if offering When I am Ready.

### **5.2 When I am Ready payments**

- Payments range in value across Wales from £84 to £220 per week. One local authority reported a payment of up to £339.99 but as this only continues up to the end of the academic year following the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, it has been ignored.
- Nearly three quarters of Welsh local authorities (16 out of 22) reported a reduction compared with pre-18 foster care allowances.
- Two local authorities reported an increase compared with allowances.
- Four local authorities reported that allowances remained the same post 18.
- Six local authorities stated that payments were partly made up from a contribution from the young person's housing benefit, other benefits, or income from work. Other authorities may have similar arrangements but did not provide detail on payment breakdown.

## **6. Conclusion and recommendations**

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

In 2018 our State of the Nation survey asked foster carers in Wales whether they felt that the allowances they received covered the full cost of looking after the child: 64 per cent of them said no.

The Welsh Government allowance is an essential tool to enable fostering services to offer a basic level of support for their foster carers' costs, and it is essential that local authorities continue to pay this Government minimum.

### **Recommendations for the Welsh Government:**

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

This research has shown that, three years after the change in law, When I am Ready payments still leave foster carers facing a drop in income if they wish to continue to offer a home to a care leaver.

Unlike for foster care there are no minimum When I am Ready allowances and levels vary greatly by local authority. Foster carers' income can reduce dramatically when they move to support young people under When I am Ready 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.

- c) The Government should introduce a national When I am Ready allowance, which covers the full cost of looking after a young person.**

## About The Fostering Network

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