

Fair funding for children in foster care

The Fostering Network is calling on governments of the UK to make urgent funding available so that children in foster care and the families that support them do not fall into poverty.

The Fostering Network has undertaken work in this area and has calculated that it costs £215 per week to raise a child in foster care aged 0-4 years, £258 per week to raise a child in foster care aged 5-10 years and £324 per week to raise a child in foster care aged over 11 years.

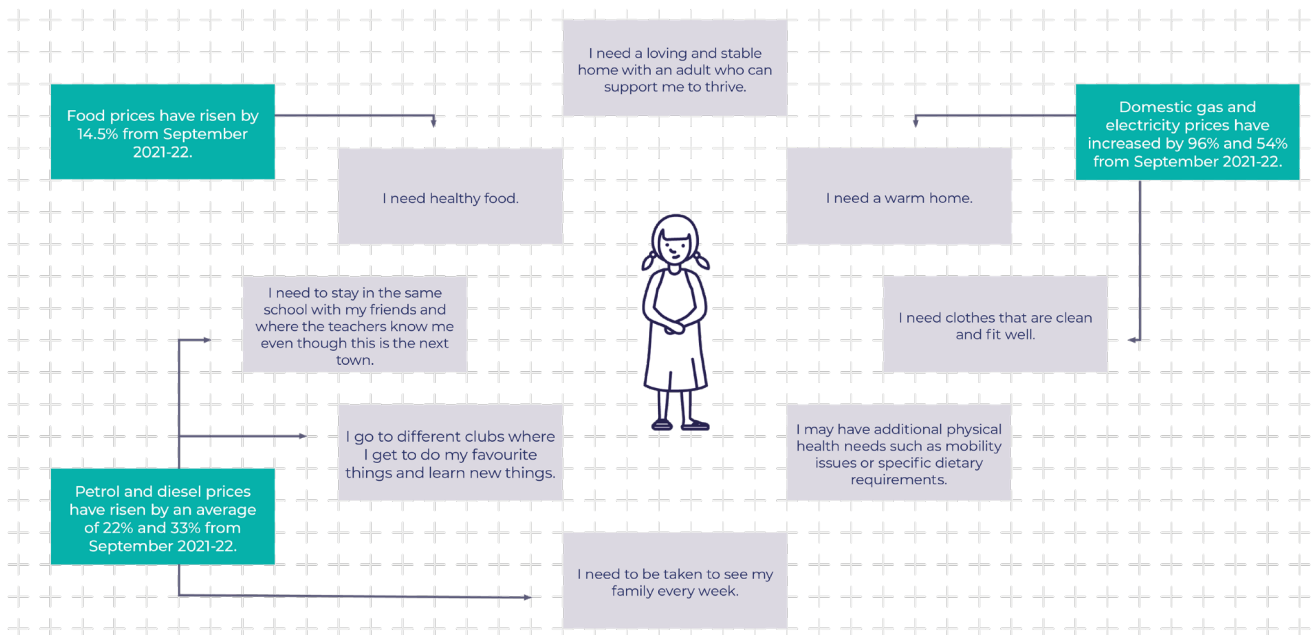
Foster carers provide loving, secure and nurturing family environments where children can thrive. When the decision is made that a child should be in foster care, the state is responsible for meeting that child's health, education, social, emotional and physical needs. This includes covering the costs required for their healthy development.

All UK governments accept this principle yet in practice, children are not getting what they need to live healthy lives.

Foster families are currently receiving much less than they need to support the children in their care. Many dip into their own pockets to cover additional costs.

This was the unacceptable situation children in foster care faced even before the cost of living crisis. Now, as inflation rises and energy, food and fuel prices soar, foster carers may no longer be able to plug the gaps left by the state.

What a child in foster care needs to thrive:



“
Our children deserve better.

Foster carer

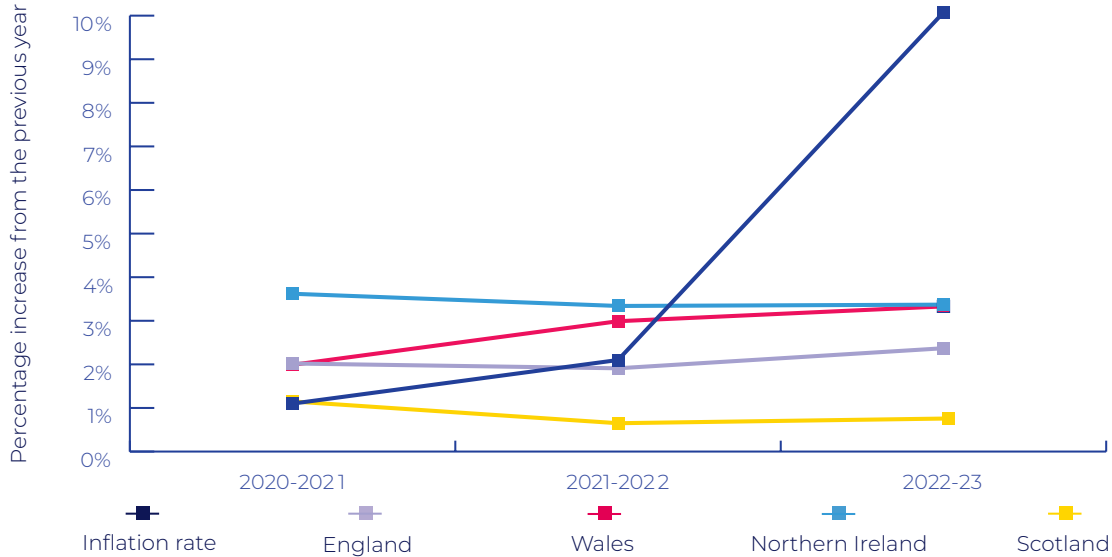
”

“
It's actually costing us to foster. That can't continue.

Foster carer

”

Foster care allowances over the past three years compared to inflation¹



With the cost of living rising, I may have to stop fostering.

Foster carer



England, Northern Ireland and Wales set national allowances intended to cover the costs of looking after a fostered child. These allowances are based on outdated figures and have not kept pace with the increased cost of living.^{2,3}

We are calling on governments across the UK to review the minimum levels of fostering allowances using up to date evidence to ensure that they cover the full costs of looking after a child.

The Scottish Government should introduce and fund a national minimum allowance for foster carers.

Governments across the UK need to make funding available now so our children do not suffer the consequences of the cost of living crisis. It is their responsibility to provide children in care with opportunities to thrive, not just to survive.



Cost of living is so high we are currently using our own money to top up... there is no spare money.

Foster carer



Notes:

1. The line graph is based on the average percentage increase of national minimum fostering allowances in each country. Scotland does not have a national minimum allowance so we have used an average of allowances paid in each local authority.
2. The Department of Education's (England) and The Department of Health's (Northern Ireland) foster care allowances are based on Sue Middleton's Small Fortunes Report, 1997 and Nina Oldfield's, The Adequacy of Foster Care Allowances, 1997.
3. The Welsh Government's recommended minimum allowances are based on the Expenditure and Food Survey 2001/2-2006 and Nina Oldfield's, The Adequacy of Foster Care Allowances, 1997.