



‘Out of Pocket: Fairer Fees for Foster Carers’

About The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK’s leading fostering charity and membership organisation. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone involved in the lives of children in foster care. We support foster carers to transform children’s lives, we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice. We work to ensure all children and young people in foster care 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. We have been leading the fostering agenda for 50 years, influencing and shaping policy and practice at every level.

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Introduction

The Fostering Network believes that a strong fee framework communicates to foster carers that they are recognised, respected and valued for the important service that they provide to society. Adequate fees are crucial for both recruitment, when prospective foster carers are considering if they can afford to foster and for long-term retention. We know from our State of the Nations’ Foster Care surveys that making a difference to

children's lives is more important to foster carers than the financial reward they receive but fees must be attractive and fit for purpose to ensure that anyone who wants to foster is financially supported to do so and not left out of pocket.

This report is based on FOIs to local authorities (LAs) for the period April 23 to March 2024. The findings show that an absence of a standardised fee system has resulted in both a large variation in foster carer fees and too many local authorities providing limited funds to their foster carers. Some local authorities provide as little as £18 a week and others as much as £750 a week.

The current fees system is creating a postcode lottery for foster carers across the UK. Some foster carers are receiving fees based on the training they've completed or for how long they've been a foster carer, with others being paid by the age or needs of the children in their care. Many foster carers are not being provided with sufficient fees to support them to meet the costs of living whilst caring for a child in foster care who they should be supporting to thrive.

Payments to foster carers are often referred to as a 'fee' and an 'allowance'. Fees are payments to the foster carer and allowances, although paid to the carer, are intended to cover the cost of caring for a child. There are currently no national frameworks for foster carer fees in any nation of the UK, however, National Minimum Allowances (NMA) are set by each government but these are not statutory or monitored nationally.¹

Our State of the Nations' Foster Care survey 2024 shows that most foster carers and fostering services want a national fees framework, similar to the national minimum/recommended allowance.

Methodology

In May 2023, The Fostering Network sent Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to all local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales that have fostering services to find out their fees and allowances rates for the financial year 2023-24. For Northern Ireland, we sent FOI requests to all health and social care trusts in June 2024 to find out about their 2023-24 fee rates. The questions we asked can be found in Appendix A.

Each year we monitor the levels of allowances and fees being paid by local authorities and trusts across the UK. We have attempted to survey Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) but have had little or no response.² You can read our 2023-24 allowances report [here](#). This year we have produced a specific report focusing on foster carer fees.

The questions about kinship foster care were not asked of Scottish local authorities as kinship care sits completely outside of the fostering system in Scotland.

From April to June 2024, we surveyed foster carers and fostering services for our regular State of the Nations' Foster Care survey 2024 which we conduct every 3 years. In this survey, we asked foster carers questions around fees and how they support themselves to foster. We also asked fostering services questions around the fees and financial support they provide to foster carers. These questions can be found in Appendix B.

We had 2,881 responses to the survey from foster carers and 114 from services across the UK. These findings inform this report from both the foster carer's perspective on local authority fee structures and provide more insight into how foster carers are financially supported to foster.³ Although the State of the Nations survey also included foster carers who foster for independent agencies, the findings reported here

¹ The Fostering Network, [Fostering Allowances](#).

² Only public authorities are obliged to respond to FOI requests.

³ These findings include mainstream and kinship foster carers fostering with local authorities in all nations, health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland, and children's trusts in England. These findings include local authorities in all nations, health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland, and children's trusts in England.

only include those who foster with local authorities and trusts to compare with the FOI responses presented in this report.

Key findings

- Mainstream foster carer fees in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland vary considerably with some foster carers receiving £732 less per week than foster carers in a different local authority or trust, a difference of £38,000 per year.⁴
- Some local authorities and trusts provided as little as £18 a week for their lowest paid mainstream foster carers and as much as £750 a week for others. Most commonly, higher fee rates were provided to foster carers as they were deemed to develop a higher skill level or had been fostering longer.
- The most common mainstream foster carer fee was between £100-200 per week with 46% of fees falling in this category. This equates to £5,200 - £10,400 per year.
- Overall, England had the greatest variance in fees. Foster carer fees in Wales were more consistent but on average lower than the other nations.
- 4% (5) LAs in England, 19% (6) LAs in Scotland, 0 LAs in Wales and 66.6% (2) trusts in Northern Ireland provided a fee that is above the National Living Wage (NLW) for a 40-hour week. The NLW is £11.44 per hour.⁵
- Based on a notional 40-hour week, almost 60% of mainstream LA foster carer fees were the equivalent of less than £5 an hour.
- Of the kinship foster carers who do receive a fee, 80% of local authorities and trusts provided kinship foster carers with the same fees as they did for mainstream foster carers. However, many kinships foster carers were placed on the lowest bands.⁶
- 60% of local authorities increase their fee rates as foster carers are deemed to gain skills, either through attending training, completing qualifications or length of time being a foster carer.
- Our State of the Nations Foster Care survey 2024 shows that most foster carers, local authorities and trusts want a national fees framework, similar to the national minimum/recommended allowance.
- Only two LAs (both in England) declared that they do not provide any of their foster carers with a fee. However, our findings also show that fostering services need to be more clear about the split between allowances and fees.
- Our 2024 State of the Nations Survey findings show that most foster carers do not work alongside their fostering role (around 60% in England, Scotland and Wales and 45% in Northern Ireland). In each nation, under 20% of foster carers are in full-time employment.

Full findings

The following findings cover 80% of all local authorities and health and social care trusts with fostering services in the UK. A full breakdown of the responses received and included in the analysis of this research is below.

	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Responses analysed	114	3	31	17
Responses missing	31	2	1	5

⁴ 'Mainstream foster carer' refers to those fostering with both local authorities and independent fostering agencies. It excludes households where the primary form of care is family and friends/kinship foster care. For this report, 'mainstream foster carers' only refers to those fostering with local authorities.

⁵ The numbers in brackets represent the number of local authorities or trusts who provide any of their foster carers with a fee that exceeds the NLW. This does not represent the number or percentage of foster carers receiving a fee over the NLW.

⁶ Kinship foster carers, also known as connected or family and friends foster carers, care for children who are 'looked after' by the local authority, which shares parental responsibility with the child's parents. Unlike in informal kinship arrangements, this family member or friend must be approved as a foster carer when the child comes into their care.

Responses excluded	3	-	-	-
Total	148	5	32	22

Reasons for missing responses:

- refusal – no other reason provided (N=18)
- information not held (N=4)
- have not responded (N=10)
- fees not included in response (N=3)
- cannot access files/link no longer exists (N=4)

Reasons for excluded responses:

- does not separate fees and allowances (N=2)
- determined on a case-by-case basis (N=1)

Foster carer finances

Our 2024 State of the Nations' Survey findings show that most foster carers do not work alongside their fostering role (around 60% in England, Scotland and Wales and 45% in Northern Ireland). In each nation, under 20% of foster carers are in full-time employment. In England, Wales and Scotland around 15% of foster carers state that they are in part-time employment – this percentage is higher in Northern Ireland with 30% of foster carers in part-time employment. These findings may show that for most foster carers it is not possible to balance the fostering role with full-time, or even part-time work. Northern Ireland is the only nation where most foster carers are in some form of employment and most of those are in part-time.

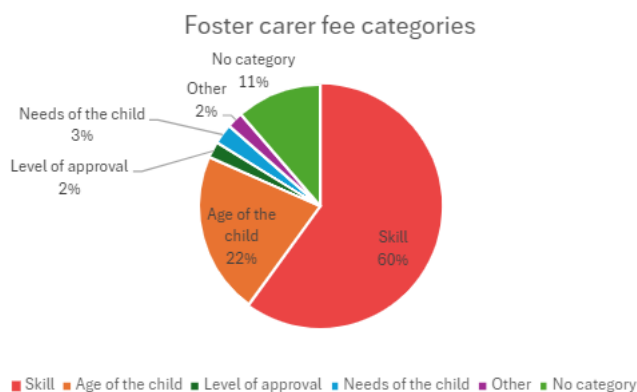
Most foster carers – over 70% in each nation – do not claim social security or welfare benefits for themselves. Over 80% of foster carers in each nation state that they have not experienced difficulties claiming benefits. However, many may not have experienced difficulties only because they haven't tried to claim benefits with 15% of foster carers responding that they have experienced significant difficulties claiming benefits due to their position as a foster carer. These findings show that most foster carers are not receiving income from either their own employment or benefits. For this reason, it is essential that foster carer fees are fit for purpose to ensure that anyone who wants to foster is financially supported to do so and not left out of pocket.

Mainstream foster carer fees⁷

How mainstream fees are categorised

There is a wide variety of ways local authorities categorise the fees they provide to foster carers. Many services refer to these categories as 'levels' or 'bands'. In some cases, local authorities use more than one category to band their fees – particularly those who categorise by the level of skill of the foster carer and the age of the child in their care. There is a split between local authorities who make the foster carer the subject of the fee and those that make the child the subject of the fee – with most local authorities selecting a foster carer focused approach.

⁷ The fee rates presented in this report are from the data collected from our 2023/24 allowances and fees FOI requests to local authorities and trusts and not our State of the Nations' Foster Care survey 2024.



The most common categorisation of fees is by ‘skill level’ – with 60% of local authorities increasing their fee rates as foster carers are deemed to gain skills, either through attending training, completing qualifications or the length of time being a foster carer. Within this category there is a wide variety of ways that local authorities categorise a lower to a higher skilled foster carer.

Many local authorities band their foster carer fees according to the age of the child with 22% of foster carers including this as an element in their fees banding. Some local authorities categorise by both the age of the child and the skill of the foster carer.

Other ways of categorising fees include 3% of local authorities by the needs of the child, 2% by the level of approval and 2% by other means.

Out of all local authorities, 11% provide one flat rate fee for all foster carers.

In Northern Ireland, most trusts did not disclose how they categorised their fees.

Flat rates



11% of local authorities provide foster carers with a flat rate foster carer fee. Trusts in Northern Ireland did not provide any flat fee rates.

The average flat fee rate was similar across England, Scotland and Wales – around £180 per week and £9,360 per year. Overall, the flat fees that foster carers receive are more consistent than the banded fees. The highest flat fee that local authorities provide is £283.87 per week.

Banded rates

The typical weekly banded mainstream foster carer fees provided by LAs across the UK:

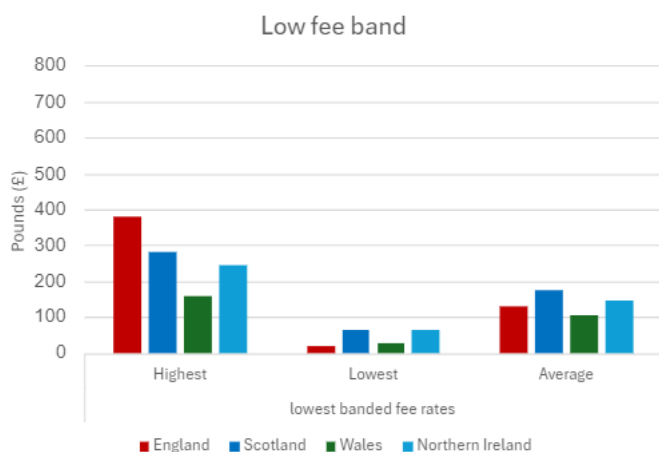
Weekly fee	Percentage of fee bands within this range
Less than £50	1%
£50- £100	11%
£100-200	46%
£200-300	30%
£300-400	6%
£400-500	4%
Over £500	2%

The most common foster carer fee was between £100 and £200 per week. This equates to between £5,200-£10,400 per year.

Lowest fee band

Some local authorities provided examples of why foster carers are on the lowest or first fee band. This ranged from, most commonly, newly approved foster carers who had completed initial/mandatory training for example, Skills to Foster or safeguarding and child protection training. For other local authorities these foster carers are those who care for children in the youngest age bracket or do not have a professional qualification in a relevant subject.⁸

The foster carer fees in this band ranged from £18.40 per week to £380 per week.



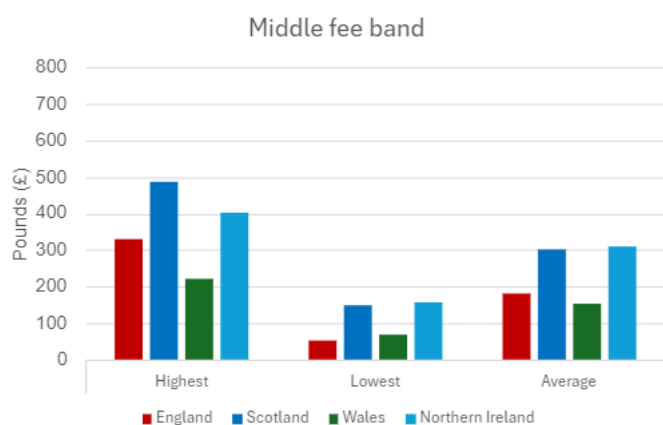
For the lowest banded foster carers, the average weekly fees were consistently low across the UK. The UK average on the lowest fee band was £128 per week - around £6,500 per year.

Middle fee band

The FOI responses show that foster carers on the middle fee band included those who have completed additional training to develop further skills in areas such as attachment and diversity and inclusion or have a few years of experience as a foster carer. In other cases, foster carers on this band have cared for children in the middle age bracket or with more complex needs.

The foster carer fees in this band ranged from £51 per week to £486.64 per week.

⁸ This is not a finite list of the reasons provided by local authorities for how they band their foster carers. It is a summary of the key themes that were identified in the FOI responses.

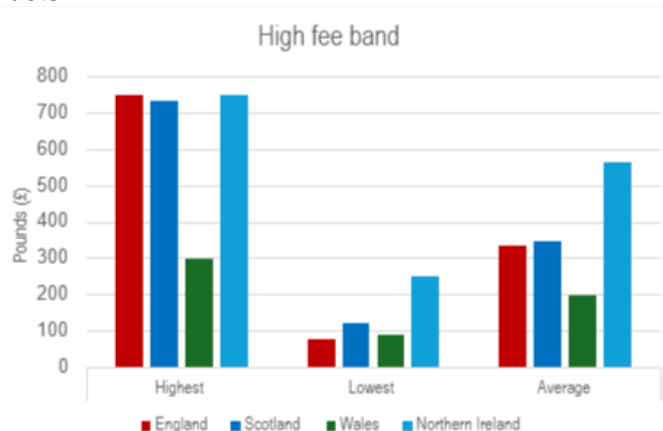


For the middle banded foster carers, the average weekly fees continued to be low across the UK. The UK average on the middle fee band was £196 per week - around £10,200 per year

Highest fee band

Foster carers on the highest fee bands were reported to be foster carers who have completed more specialist training, assisted with foster carer recruitment, have a professional level qualification in a relevant subject area, helped with the training and support of other foster carers or are deemed to have good communication with other professionals. In other cases, these foster carers were caring for older children or children with more complex needs. Foster carers who were on specialist programmes were excluded from this band where stated.

Foster carers fees on this fee band range from £75 per week to £750 per week across local authorities and trusts.



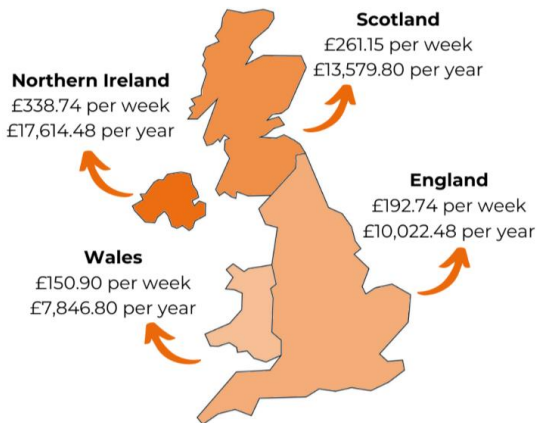
For the highest banded foster carers, the average weekly fees increased substantially across the UK. The UK average on the highest fee band was £282 per week - around £14,700 per year.

In England and Scotland, the level of disparity within the highest banded foster carer fee was vast – with both nations having maximum differences of over £30,000 per year. This finding shows the extent of the postcode lottery that foster carers face increases as foster carers are deemed by local authorities to be more qualified or described as carrying out more challenging roles. This finding also draws attention to the low rates LAs are providing even to those they deem as their most skilled foster carers caring for some of the most vulnerable children in foster care.

All fees

Across the UK the average mainstream foster carer fee provided by local authorities and trusts was £202 per week. This equates to around £10,500 per year, if foster carers are provided with a fee for all 52 weeks of the year.

Average foster carer fee across the UK



This map compares the overall average foster carer fee for each nation across all the bands. These findings follow the trends of the individual bands. LAs in Wales provide the lowest average fee rates followed by England, Scotland and then Northern Ireland.⁹

Differences in fees across the nations

	UK	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Max difference between weekly foster carer fees	£731.60	£731.60	£687.71	£667.24	£273
Max difference between annual foster carer fees	£38,043	£38,043	£35,761	£34,696	£14,196

The data above shows the disparity within fee payments to foster carers. England and Scotland and Northern Ireland had the most disparity in their fee rates.

National Living Wage

Around 60% of foster carers do not work alongside fostering.¹⁰ The National Living Wage (NLW) does not apply to foster carers, but it is a useful tool for comparison to assess if foster carer fees meet the cost of living for those who rely on their fee as their main source of income. The NLW is adapted year-to-year to reflect the cost of living in the UK.

	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Number of LAs/trusts providing fees over the NLW for a 40 hour week	5	2	6	0
Percentage of LAs/trusts providing fees over the NLW for a 40 hour week	4%	66.6%	19%	-

⁹ The averages in this map are based off the fees structures that LAs have provided and does not consider the number of foster carers who do not receive a fee.

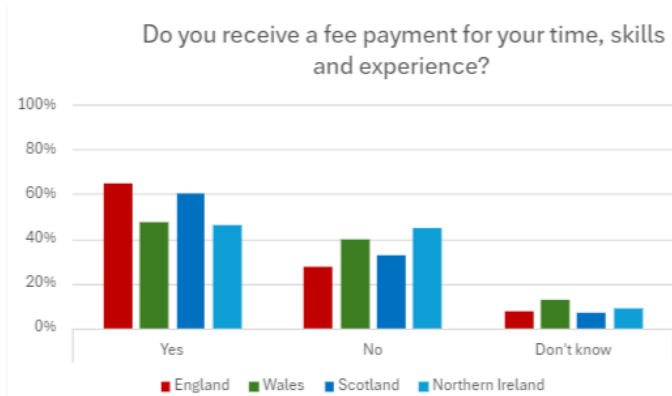
¹⁰ In England, Scotland and Wales.

The findings above show the same concern that many foster carers in our State of the Nations survey expressed. Across all four nations, most foster carers do not feel that their fee is sufficient to cover essential living costs for themselves. Foster carers in Wales feel as though their fees are the most insufficient – this aligns with the findings from our FOI requests as local authorities in Wales provided the lowest average fee. Around 70% of foster carers across the UK told us that they felt that the cost of living had an impact on their fostering.

No fees

Most local authorities in their FOI responses stated that they provided their foster carers with a weekly fee – with two LAs, both in England, disclosing that they did not provide fees to any of their foster carers. 62 LAs also state that they do not provide fees to some of their foster carers, for example:

- 34% stated that they did not provide a fee to some of their kinship foster carers (mostly for temporary approved kinship placements).
- 58% did not provide a fee to mainstream foster carers on the bottom fee band – this includes those who are in the pre-approval stage, having not completed training or not having a high enough skill level.
- There was a substantial number of foster carers and kinship foster carers across all three health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland who do not receive a fee.



Our State of the Nations findings also show that there are many foster carers who either do not receive a fee from their fostering service or are not made aware that they are receiving a fee as part of their financial support package. Over half of the foster carers in Wales and Northern Ireland either do not receive a fee or do not know if they receive a fee. Most foster carers in England and Scotland told us that they do receive a fee from their local authority.

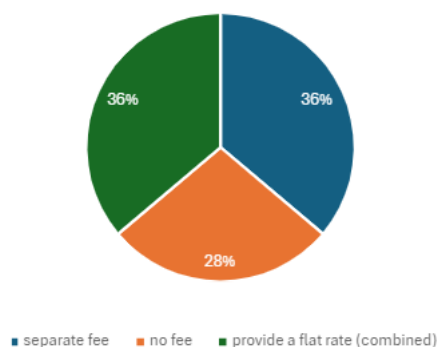
We also asked fostering services if they pay foster carers a fee for their time, skills and experience. Seven local authorities and trusts across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland declared that they do not provide their foster carers with a fee. This number is significantly higher than we found in the FOI responses, where two local authorities, both in England, stated that they do not provide foster carer fees. All local authorities in Wales that answered this question provide their foster carers with a fee. This is likely due to Foster Wales' work towards ensuring that all 22 local authorities in Wales provide foster carers with the same level of financial support.

Fees for post-foster care arrangements

Just under two thirds of local authorities and trusts responded to our FOI question about foster carer fees for post-foster care arrangements. These responses cover post-foster care arrangements across the UK.¹¹

¹¹ Post-foster care provision is legally in place and known as Staying Put in England (2014) and When I Am Ready in Wales (2016) and can be entered into by young people in foster care to continue living with their foster carers once they turn 18. In Scotland, young people leaving care from the age of 16 are eligible to request a Continuing Care (2015) placement where they can remain living with their former foster carer. In Northern Ireland, post-18 provision differs from

Post foster care fees

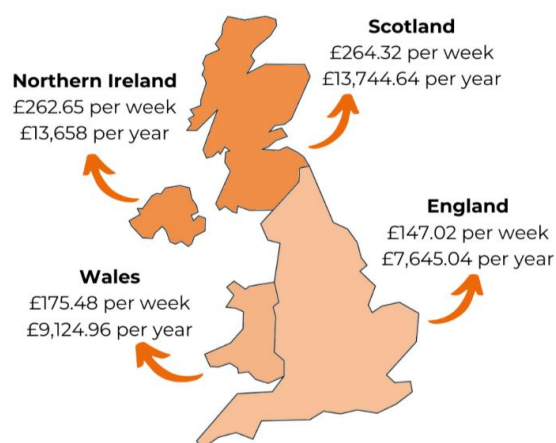


There was a lack of consistency across the UK in how local authorities provide financial support to foster carers in post-foster care arrangements. This is a similar finding to what we found in our allowances report. There was an equal split between post-foster care arrangements which did not separate the foster carer's fee from their allowance and for those who did provide a separate fee.

Out of the 36% of LAs which provided foster carers with a separate fee, the average weekly fee for post-foster care placements across the UK was £189 per week. This is a reduced average fee rate from foster carers who are caring for children and young people in foster care – around £13 less per week or £680 less per year.

28% of local authorities did not provide post-foster care fees.¹² This significantly increased from pre-16/18 foster care and means that many foster carers experienced a drop in financial support when entering a post-foster care arrangement.

Average post-foster care fee across the UK



Governments and local authorities must consider how this drop in financial support impacts the rate of successful transitions into post-foster care arrangements so that every young person in foster care has security and stability and is supported to thrive into adulthood.

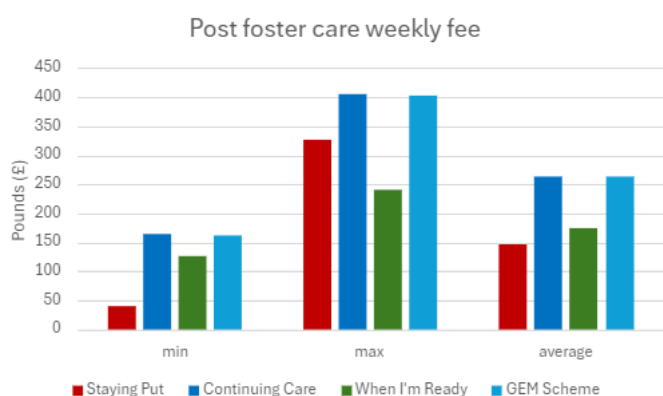
the rest of the UK. The Going the Extra Mile (GEM) scheme launched in 2010 is non-statutory and only available to young people aged 18 to 21 who are in education, employment or training.

¹² All health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland provided a separate fee.

Fees for foster carers in Continuing Care (Scotland) arrangements and Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Scheme (Northern Ireland) were on average the highest, followed by When I'm Ready (Wales) and then Staying Put (England).

There is a wide variation in local authorities' approaches to post-foster care fees. On average:

- In England, local authority foster carer fees reduce by 24% when foster carers enter a Staying Put arrangement.
- In Wales, local authority foster carer fees increase by 16% when foster carers enter a When I'm Ready arrangement.
- In Scotland, local authority foster carer fees remain similar when young people request a Continuing Care arrangement.
- In Northern Ireland, health and social care trust foster carer fees reduce by 22% when foster carers enter a GEM scheme arrangement.



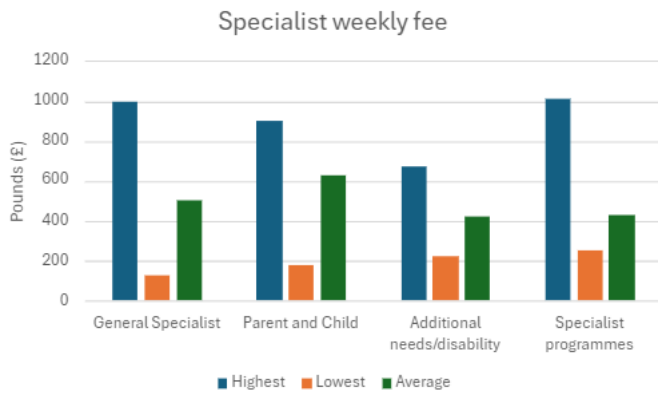
	UK	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Max difference between weekly post-foster carer fees	£367.25	£287.42	£243.30	£241.50	£114.59
Max difference between annual post-foster carer fees	£19,097	£14,946	£12,652	£12,558	£5,959

Whilst there was less disparity in post-foster care fees than for pre-16/18 foster carer fees, there was still a considerable amount of variation within and between each nation.

Specialist foster carer fees

61 local authorities provided information on the weekly foster carer fees they give to specialist foster carers. Most of the fees that fall into this category were for foster carers who take part in specialist fostering programmes such as Mockingbird, Step Down prevention, and parent and child placements or for caring for children with additional needs.

Out of all the specialist fees provided, 60% are over the NLW for a 40-hour week. This is significantly higher than for mainstream fees. The average specialist fee is £495 per week. This is almost £300 more per week than the average foster carer on a mainstream band.



Foster carers supporting parent and child placements received the highest average weekly fee of £625, followed by general specialists who receive on average £510.56 per week. The lower specialist fees on average are provided to foster carers involved in specialist programmes, who receive on average £430 per week, and foster carers supporting children with additional needs or a disability, who receive £420 per week.

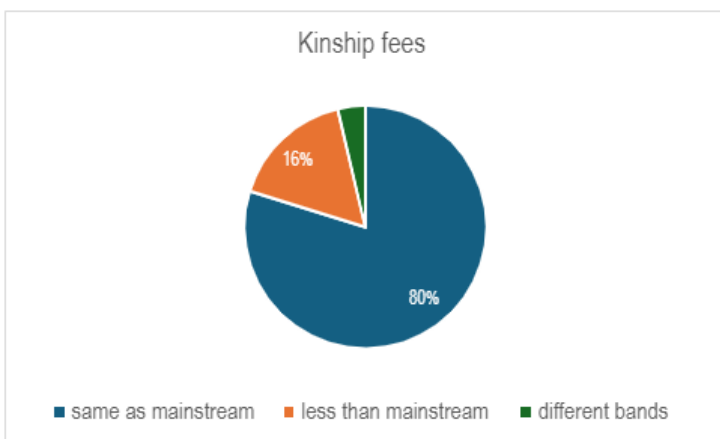
Kinship foster carer fees

We asked local authorities a question on the fees they provide to kinship foster carers. Kinship foster carers should be entitled to the same financial support as unrelated foster carers, including any fees which they meet the criteria for.

In Scotland, kinship/friends and family care is separate from foster care. Therefore, kinship carer fees in Scotland are not included in this report.

Around 70% of LAs and trusts across England, Northern Ireland and Wales responded to the question about kinship foster carer fees. Out of these services, 87% stated that they provided at least some of their kinship foster carers with a fee and 12.8% did not provide their kinship foster carers with any fee.

In England, 92% of LAs provided some of their kinship foster carers with a fee. This percentage is considerably less in Wales, as only 67% of the LAs provided their kinship foster carers with a fee. Only one of the three trusts that responded to our FOI requests in Northern Ireland provide some of their kinship foster carers with a fee – most kinship foster carers in this trust did not receive a fee.

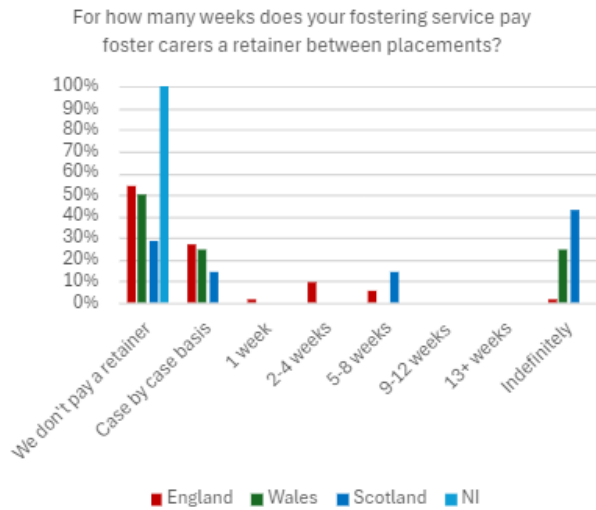


Out of the kinship foster carers who do receive a fee, 80% of local authorities provided the same fee bands as they did for mainstream foster carers. However, within these local authorities, 44% in England and 29% in Wales provided most of their kinship foster carers with the fee on the lowest band.

16% of local authorities provided kinship foster carers with less than mainstream foster carers and 4% created a different banding structure for kinship foster carers

Retainer fees

In our State of the Nations survey, we asked fostering services about the retainers they provide for foster carers between placements. Retainers ensure that foster carers are being provided with a fee even when they do not have a child currently in their care. This could be because they are undertaking or delivering training, assisting in recruiting foster carers or have a short-term gap between their placements.



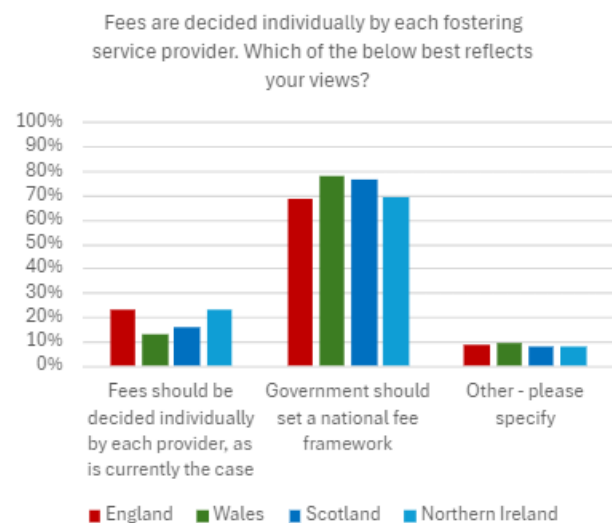
As shown above, most fostering services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland do not provide a retainer to their foster carers. Local authorities in Wales that do provide a retainer mostly responded that they provided retainers to their foster carers indefinitely. These responses show that most services do not have a set period for which they will provide foster carers with a retainer. This is likely to cause discrepancies between services across the UK.

Views on the current foster carer fee structure

Foster carers

In our State of the Nations survey, we asked foster carers how they would like to see their fees be structured.

The majority, ranging from 68-78% in each nation, want to see the government set a national fee framework, similar to the national minimum allowances framework that is currently in place across the country. This would ensure that fostering services must provide all foster carers with a minimum fee to support them to foster and to recognise their time, skills and experience.



Fostering Services

As with foster carers, most fostering services – over 70% in England, Scotland and Wales – believe that there should be a national fee framework. One trust in Northern Ireland believes that fees should continue to be provided individually by each provider, as is currently the case.

The impact

What does this mean for foster carers?

Foster carers have a unique role within children's social care – they are some of the only individuals who provide care for children in their own homes, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and welcome them into their families. Foster carers must develop a specific set of skills, expertise and experience to support a child to thrive. This should be recognised through an adequate foster carers' fee.

The current approach of LAs banding their own foster carer fees is outdated and unfair for all foster carers. In this current system, foster carers are being deemed as more deserving of increased financial support for different reasons across the UK and many foster carers, especially those new to the role, are losing out. The findings in this report show that foster carers receive on average low fees and are subjected to a disparate postcode lottery.

Foster carer recruitment and retention

We believe that adequate foster carer fees are crucial for making fostering a viable and sustainable option for prospective foster carers looking to make a difference in the lives of children. Our FOIs have shown that many foster carers on the lowest fees are those who are new to fostering or have not yet completed certain training. Local authorities and government officials must consider how providing new foster carers with very low fees impacts the recruitment and retention of foster carers. Fees must be competitive to bring more carers into the field as well as fit for purpose to ensure that anyone who wants to foster is financially supported to do so and not left out of pocket. This is particularly relevant if services want to attract a greater skill level into fostering and for the public to see fostering as a viable role.

Overall, the postcode lottery of foster carer fees increases as foster carers complete more training and are deemed to develop their expertise in caring for children and young people in foster care. The methods of assessment of level of expertise, skills and ability are varied and inconsistent. It could be argued that all foster carers have met the required skill level by the nature of achieving regulatory approval. It is also in the best interest of children that this is achieved at an early stage and that continued personal and professional development should be expected of all foster carers.

Statistics from our State of the Nations' 2024 survey found that most foster carers who responded do not work alongside their fostering role. Children and young people who come into care require dedicated care and the time of their foster carers. For these children, foster carers may have to either reduce their working hours or not work at all.

For foster carers on low or no alternative income, insufficient fees could result in them not being able to meet the costs of living and in worst cases living in poverty. No foster carer should be expected to live in poverty. Fostering services are recruiting foster carers with the skills to transform children's lives, so there should be a level of fee that recognises this important and unique role.

Foster carer fees must also be seen as a key factor in diversifying the recruitment and retention of foster carers. The demographic pool of foster carers will inevitably be limited to those who can afford to foster without receiving an adequate fee if foster carer fees remain low.

Respect in the team around the child

Receiving a low fee can also contribute to foster carers feeling that their role is under-valued and not respected in the team around the child.

Our recruitment and retention research reported that foster carers facing challenges continued fostering because of the children they care for, despite a lack of support.¹³ However, foster carers are more likely to be retained and can provide better care for children when they feel well supported, respected, and are provided with a well-organised fostering service and an adequate fee to support them to foster.

Recommendations

Fostering is a devolved policy area. We are calling for all governments to ensure more consistency for foster carer finances across the UK.

1. **Each government of the UK should carry out comprehensive reviews of foster carer fees** to investigate and address the low level of fee rates and UK-wide postcode lottery.
2. **Each government of the UK should create a national recommended foster carer fee** reviewed each year in line with inflation. Governments of the UK should work together to ensure consistency between these recommended fees.
3. **Every foster carer, approved with LAs or IFAs and including kinship foster carers and post-foster care carers**, should receive the same consistent fee.
4. **Every foster carer should receive a national recommended fee payment in addition to the child's allowance.** The national recommended fee can be uplifted to reflect different fostering situations, for example emergency or parent and child placements, where a multiplier may be applied to the fee to recognise additional requirements of the role. Any identified additional needs of children should be paid as an enhancement to the child's allowance and not to the foster carer's fee payment.
5. **Every foster carer should receive a fee payment for 52 weeks a year**, provided they remain approved and available to foster children and young people matched to their family. This includes periods where the fostering service are investigating allegations, concerns or complaints until the process is concluded.
6. **Governments should invest in fostering services** to ensure that the necessary financial support is available to provide the national recommended foster carer fee to every foster carer.
7. **Governments should regulate to monitor the implementation of a national recommended fee** to ensure consistency of publishing and reporting across the UK.
8. **Every foster carer should receive transparent and clear information which enables them to understand how their fostering payments are made.** This should distinguish clearly between foster carer fees and the child's allowances.

Appendices

Appendix A

Questions on foster carer fees from 2023/24 FOI requests:

- For mainstream foster carers your 2023/24 fee/reward structure (general/unconnected carers) (NB this is different to allowances for the child). Please include:
 - i. Details of the levels/bands for carers and how much you pay per week at each level/band.

¹³ The Fostering Network (2023), [Foster care retention and recruitment in England](#).

- ii. The number of mainstream foster carers on each level/band, including those that receive no fee on top of the child's allowance.
 - Please detail any additional fees paid to for children with additional support needs or disabilities.
 - For kinship foster carers your 2023/24 fee/reward structure (NB this is different to allowances for the child). Please include:
 - i. Details of the levels/bands for carers and how much you pay per week at each level/band.
- ii. The number of kinship foster carers on each level/band, including those that receive no fee on top of the child's allowance.
 - Your 2023-24 weekly fee payments for former foster carers looking after young people in [16/18+ arrangements – name of each scheme added in for each country], broken down by year 1, year 2, and year 3 if necessary.

Appendix B

Questions on fees and foster carer finances from State of the Nations' Foster Care survey 2024

Foster carers:

- Do you work alongside your fostering?
- Do you receive social security/ welfare benefits for yourself (not including any benefits for children in your care)?
- Have you experienced any difficulties with claiming benefits due to your position as a foster carer?
- Do you receive a fee payment for your time, skills and experience?
- How is your fee payment calculated?
- What is your typical weekly fostering fee payment?
- Do you feel your fee is sufficient to cover your essential living costs, for example bills, rent or mortgage, and food (not for the children you foster)?
- While allowances are set nationally by each of the four governments of the UK, there is no central legislation or guidance about fees for foster carers. Fees are decided individually by each fostering service provider. Which of the below best reflects your views?

Fostering services:

- Does your fostering service pay foster carers a fee for their time, skills and experience? (This does not include the allowance to cover the cost of looking after a child.)
- While allowances for the child are set nationally by each of the four governments of the UK, there is no central legislation or guidance about fees for foster carers. These are set individually by each fostering service provider. Which of the below best reflects your views?
- For how many weeks does your fostering service pay foster carers a retainer between placements?

For more information on this report, please contact Policy@fostering.net