



Natalie Don-Innes MSP  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

The Fostering Network  
38 Queen Street  
Glasgow  
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2 April 2025

Dear Natalie Don-Innes MSP,

### **The Fostering Network's key priorities for The Promise Bill**

We are writing to you ahead of the much-anticipated Promise Bill to ask that you take this opportunity to deliver the transformative change that the fostering sector so urgently needs in relation to recruitment and retention in 2025.

We were happy to be able to facilitate the Scottish Government's engagement sessions for the Future of Foster Care consultation, and were particularly pleased that you personally attended a session to hear directly from foster carers in Renfrewshire Council.

Following the consultation engagement sessions, we have established an advisory board of 20 foster carers from across Scotland. In their first meeting, the advisory board agreed that their top priority for the forthcoming year is foster carers' value, status and recognition.

To this end, they want to see the Scottish Government take the following key actions:

- Increase the Scottish Recommended Allowance and introduce a national minimum fee framework for foster carers, both with a specified rate for Continuing Care payments
- Introduce a national learning and development framework for foster carers
- Update the 2013 allegations guidance and place it on a statutory footing

Each of these changes would help to improve foster carers' sense of value, status and recognition, and provide the necessary practical support to allow them to continue in their vital role. In our 2024 State of the Nations' Foster Care survey published in February 2025 – the largest independent survey of the fostering sector in the UK – similar priorities emerged.

The Promise Bill is a clear opportunity to lay the foundation for these changes to be made, to ensure foster carers are truly valued at a national level.

We appreciate the work that is already ongoing to support the fostering sector, including the forthcoming national foster carer recruitment campaign which we are assisting with. However, we must now use the Bill to make the changes needed to retain the foster carers we already have, and to prevent new carers from leaving soon after they are recruited.





**Allowances:** The introduction of a Scottish Recommended Allowance was a long-awaited positive step, but the decision not to implement even an inflationary level increase in 2024-25 has left foster families struggling to make ends meet.<sup>1</sup> We would like to see the current SRA urgently increased to meet our recommended rates for 2025-26 – and well ahead of the start of each financial year going forwards – and the Promise Bill used to introduce a statutory uprating duty for allowances for foster and kinship carers, as is the case for devolved benefits under the Social Security (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2025.

**Fees:** Allowances cannot be considered in isolation and foster carers also need financial support to cover their own living costs, as most do not work alongside fostering.<sup>2</sup> Our research shows that existing fees are hugely inadequate<sup>3</sup> and most foster carers in Scotland agree that the Government should set a national minimum fee framework.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the Promise Bill should also be used to give the Scottish Government powers to set a national fee framework (again with a statutory uprating duty) through secondary legislation, with a duty on all services to pay the set fees.

**Learning and development:** Most foster carers we surveyed in Scotland also agreed that there should be a standardised framework for pre- and post-approval training for foster carers.<sup>5</sup> We worked with AFKA Cymru to develop a national learning and development framework for Wales, but this is not on a statutory footing and has not been widely rolled out. The Promise Bill should therefore require the Scottish Government to introduce such a framework on a statutory footing, within a set timeframe.

**Allegations guidance:** The current guidance on allegations is not statutory and is not consistently followed. Foster carers' experiences of support throughout allegations investigations remain poor across Scotland.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, we would like to see this guidance made statutory through the Bill, with a requirement for fostering services to provide foster carers with independent support, counselling, full fees and regular communication throughout allegation investigations.

**Register for foster carers:** Alongside these priorities, we welcome the consideration the Scottish Government has been giving to introducing a national register of foster carers, which we have been campaigning on for many years, and which we believe would improve foster carers' status as well as supporting better-informed local matching of children and carers.<sup>7</sup> We hope to see this included in the Promise Bill and will strongly support it.

We trust that you will consider our recommendations, which are based on extensive engagement with the foster care community through our State of the Nations research, consultation events and our new advisory board. We look forward to continuing to work together to progress our shared vision to keep the Promise by 2030.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Thomas  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Fostering Network

Anne Currie  
Assistant Director (Scotland)





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Data from our 2024 State of the Nations' Foster Care survey:

<sup>1</sup> Only 29% of foster carers surveyed in Scotland said they feel their allowance and any expenses meet the full costs of looking after the children they foster.

<sup>2</sup> Most foster carers surveyed in Scotland (62%) said they do not work alongside their fostering.

<sup>3</sup> Only 21% of foster carers surveyed in Scotland said their fee is sufficient to cover their essential living costs, for example bills, rent or mortgage, and food (not for the children they foster).

<sup>4</sup> Almost three quarters (73%) of foster carers, and 72% (13 of 18) fostering services, surveyed in Scotland said they think government should set a national fee framework to apply to all fostering services.

<sup>5</sup> 69% of foster carers, and 72% (13 of 18) fostering services, surveyed in Scotland agreed that there should be a standardised accredited framework for pre- and post-approval training of foster carers.

<sup>6</sup> Only 61% of foster carers surveyed in Scotland who had experienced an allegation in the previous 24 months said they received independent support, a fifth (21%) received specialist counselling support, and a fifth (21%) were offered support for their wider family.

<sup>7</sup> Excluding those who said they need more information, two thirds (65%) of foster carers surveyed in Scotland said they support proposals to create a national register of foster carers, while 12% said they oppose them, and 23% neither support nor oppose them. 46% of fostering services in Scotland (6 of 13) that responded to this question said they support the proposals, 15% (2 of 13) oppose them, and 39% (5 of 13) neither support nor oppose them.

