



Scotland Foster Care Allowances Survey 2021-22

1. Introduction

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity and membership organisation. 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.

In Scotland, we are proud to have 100 per cent membership of all local authorities and 97 per cent of fostering households in membership. Our views are informed by our members, as well as through research; in this way we aim to be the voice of foster care.

2. Background and context

All foster carers receive a weekly fostering allowance from their fostering service when they have a child in placement, which is given to cover the cost of caring for the child. Costs include food, clothes, toiletries, travel and all other expenses incurred. Allowances vary depending on the age of the child and usually increase on an annual basis to reflect the increases of the cost of living and inflation. However, in some cases, they fall short. Our 2021 State of the Nation's Foster Care Survey found that 47 per cent of foster carers in Scotland reported their allowances do not meet the full cost of looking after a child. All fostering service respondents from Scotland agreed with the introduction of a national minimum allowance (NMA).

Some foster carers also get a fee for their time, skills and experience. This report focuses purely on the allowances given to the foster carer to cover the costs of looking after a fostered child and not on fees.

Scotland is the only country in the UK not to have a national minimum allowance. A long-standing campaign led by The Fostering Network, together with our members, led to a commitment in the 2016 Scottish National Party Manifesto to implement a national allowance for foster care. A national review of care allowances was carried out between 2017-2018. Yet, the national minimum allowance has still not been implemented.

In February 2020, the Independent Care Review published *The Promise*¹, in which it states that 'to

¹ [The Promise](#), Independent Care Review, February 2020.

provide the care that children require, foster carers must be sufficiently financially maintained’.

The Scottish Government have been in discussion with The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), a national association representing Scottish councils, on how to implement a national allowance, but progress appears to have stalled.

There cannot be any further delays in implementing a national minimum allowance to safeguard against the postcode lottery that the 4,750 children in foster care in Scotland currently face and to ensure all foster carers in Scotland receive the financial support required to meet children’s needs.

3. About this report

In the summer of 2021, The Fostering Network conducted a survey of all 32 local authorities in Scotland using freedom of information requests in order to get a picture of fostering allowances for local authority foster carers across the country. The wording of the freedom of information requests were as follows:

- 1) *Please could you tell me your 2021-22 weekly foster care allowances for all age bands, NOT including any fee/reward element for foster carers.*
- 2) *Please detail any allowances that ALL foster carers can claim in addition to their weekly allowance, e.g. holiday allowance or mileage.*
- 3) *Please could you tell me your 2021-22 weekly allowances for former foster carers looking after young people in 16+/18+ Continuing Care arrangements, broken down by year 1, year 2, and year 3+ if necessary.*

4. Results of the foster care allowances survey 2021-22

4.1 Overview

We collected data from all 32 local authorities in Scotland, 23 of which provided information on their Continuing Care allowances. Scotland is the only country within the UK that does not set a national minimum allowance. To gain an indication of whether Scottish local authorities are giving foster carers sufficient allowances, we have compared the results with the NMA in England and Wales.

4.2 Results

Table 1: Weekly allowances for children and young people in foster care and those in a continuing care arrangement.

Boxes shaded in blue indicate foster care allowances which are below the NMA for Wales.

White text indicates foster care allowances below the NMA for England.²

Local authority	Age ranges				Continuing Care
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+	
England	£134-138	£152	£173	£202	
Wales	£194	£177	£177	£220	
Aberdeen City	137.44	156.55	194.89	237.05	237.05
Aberdeenshire	150.12	170.65	212.12	258.14	258.14
Angus Council	154.63	176.13	219.27	266.75	266.75
Argyll & Bute	196.71	196.71	240.40	240.40	240.40
Clackmannanshire	134.40	153.09	190.58	231.79	150.00
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	140.00	160.00	199.00	242.00	242.00
Dumfries & Galloway	130.34	148.47	184.80	224.77	
Dundee City	143.67	163.64	203.70	247.82	117.89
East Ayrshire	152.70	152.70	224.50	224.50	245.00
East Dunbartonshire	128.22	146.05	181.81	221.13	
East Lothian	114.45	133.70	157.98- 163.74	200.11	146.99
East Renfrewshire	136.68	155.69	193.83	235.75	193.83
Edinburgh	110.00	133.93	166.73 - 171.40	205.68	
Falkirk	137.18	156.26	194.53	226.84	
Fife	102.91	116.27	144.29	184.41	
Glasgow City	137.18	156.30	194.54	236.60	236.60
Highland Council	77.69	96.40	120.00	155.36	155.36
Inverclyde	127.59	145.34	180.93	220.05	220.05
Midlothian	126.00	140.00	162.00	217.00	
Moray	142.86	162.73	202.58	246.44	246.44
North Ayrshire	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	250.00
North Lanarkshire	142.82	162.69	202.51	246.33	246.33
Orkney Islands	142.86	162.73	202.58	246.44	246.44
Perth & Kinross	134.47	153.16	190.68	231.91	320.00
Renfrewshire	125.86	125.86	125.86	125.86	
Scottish Borders	132.54	132.54	198.78	198.78	198.78
Shetland Islands	145.00	165.17	205.62	250.14	
South Ayrshire	154.35	154.35	185.85	217.35	200.00
South Lanarkshire	139.33	158.72	197.56	240.30	240.30
Stirling	137.08	156.15	194.39	236.42	179.31
West Dunbartonshire	147.90	168.30	209.10	255.00	
West Lothian	120.62	149.70	186.26	241.27	241.27

² Allowances in England vary according to where foster carers live. There are three levels – London, South East and Rest of England. For the purposes of this report, we have compared allowances in Scotland to allowances for the 'Rest of England'.

Table 2: Number of Scottish local authorities that pay below the national minimum allowances in England and Wales for the year commencing 1 April 2021 by age group.

Age group	Below the National Minimum Allowance in Wales	Below the National Minimum Allowance in England
0-4	30	11
5-10	30	11
11-15	6	6
16-17	9	6

Overall, 31 out of 32 local authorities set their allowances below the Welsh NMA for at least one age group and of these, 12 also set their allowances below the English NMA for at least one age group.

Foster care allowances vary significantly within each age band – with some foster carers receiving less than half the amount of their counterparts in another area. In a year, this difference can be as much as £6,346 per child. The range of allowances given for looking after children in the following age categories was:

- £77.96 to £200 per week for children aged 0-4
- £96.40 to £200 per week for children aged 5-10
- £120.00 to £240.40 per week for children aged 11 to 15
- £125.86 to £266.75 per week for children aged 16+

Six out of twenty-two local authorities decreased the allowance for Continuing Care arrangements compared to those caring for young people aged 16+.

4.3. Additional allowances

We also asked local authorities about the additional allowances that are available to all foster carers. 27 local authorities gave further information about the additional allowances foster carers can claim for such as mileage, holidays, birthdays and exceptional costs.

19 local authorities said they give additional payments for holidays, birthdays and Christmas or other festivals, which ranged between being equivalent to one and four weeks of foster care allowances.

20 local authorities said they pay additional expenses for mileage, although the terms and rates varied.

Examples of additional expenses that foster carers can claim include school trips, clothing, broadband, costs associated with family contact and assisting with foster care training.

4.4. A decade of allowances

Table 3: Frozen allowances over the last 10 years for age group 0 – 4 years³

Boxes shaded in blue indicate foster care allowances which have been frozen from the previous year.

Local authority	Number of years frozen	% Increase over 10 years*	2021 - 2022	2020 - 2021	2019 - 2020	2018 - 2019	2017 - 2018	2016 - 2017	2015 - 2016	2014 - 2015	2013 - 2014	2012 - 2013
Aberdeen City	0	9.9%	137.44	135.41	135.41	131.47	131.47	130.17	130.17	128.88	127.60	125.09
Aberdeenshire	1	11.6%	150.12	150.12	147.18	145.72	144.28	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	134.49
Angus Council	0	20.8%	154.63	151.60	147.18	147.18	147.18	145.00	142.86	140.33	137.18	128.00
Argyll & Bute	6	0.0%	196.71	196.71	196.71	196.71	196.71	196.71	196.71			
Clackmannanshire	7	4.7%	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	131.37	128.42
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	6	44.6%	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	96.82	96.82	96.82
Dumfries & Galloway	9	0.0%	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34
Dundee City	0	17.9%	143.67	141.89	140.14	157.56	136.70	135.01	133.34	130.97	130.32	121.82
East Ayrshire	4	26.8%	152.70	152.70	152.70	152.70	152.70	205.00	205.00	200.00	123.88	120.39
East Dunbartonshire	6	2.5%	128.22	128.22	128.22	128.22	128.22	128.22	128.22	125.09	125.09	125.09
East Lothian	8	2.7%	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	111.44
East Renfrewshire	0	9.3%	136.68	132.70	128.84	125.09	125.09	125.09	125.09	125.09	125.09	125.09
Edinburgh	0	10.7%	110.00	108.37	106.77	104.47	102.42	101.40	101.40	101.40	101.40	99.41
Falkirk	8	2.0%	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	134.49
Fife	0	20.7%	102.91	100.40	97.95	95.56	93.23	92.31	91.40	89.61	87.42	85.29
Glasgow City	7	4.3%	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	134.49	131.47
Highland Council	9	0.0%	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69
Inverclyde	7	2.0%	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	125.09	125.09
Midlothian	1	50.4%	126.00	126.00	100.00	100.32	100.32	100.32	100.32	100.32	99.33	83.77

³ We have selected one age band for clarity of comparison (any annual increase will usually apply to all age bands).

Moray	6	6.2%	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	134.49
North Ayrshire	3	52.4%	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	131.26	131.26	131.26			
North Lanarkshire	4	9.2%	142.82	142.82	142.82	142.82	142.86	138.64	137.27	137.27	133.66	130.78
Orkney Islands	6	8.7%	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	131.47
Perth & Kinross	9	0.0%	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47
Renfrewshire	2	2.7%	125.86	125.86	125.86	108.79	108.00	122.59				
Scottish Borders	0	10.4%	132.54	127.40	127.40	123.68	123.68	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	120.05
Shetland Islands	4	-1.4%	145.00	145.00	145.00	145.00	145.00	147.00				
South Ayrshire	1	15.4%	154.35	154.35	147.00	147.00	145.00	139.33	139.33	136.87	133.79	
South Lanarkshire	4	6.2%	139.33	139.33	139.33	139.33	139.33	134.40	134.40	134.40	131.77	131.17
Stirling	1	6.7%	137.08	137.08	134.40	134.40	134.40	140.00	140.00	96.82	96.82	128.42
West Dunbartonshire	0	10.0%	147.90	145.00	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	134.49
West Lothian	0	57.5%	120.62	117.11	113.81	110.60	107.90	105.78	103.71	101.68	99.69	76.57

*Where we do not have the allowances going back ten years, we have compared the percentage increase to the earliest allowance available.

- Only 10 local authorities increased their foster care allowances this year
- Two-thirds of local authorities have frozen their allowances in the past year
- Three-fifths have been frozen for the past two years
- Two-fifths have been frozen for the past five years
- Over a quarter of fostering services had the same allowance for seven years
- Three local authorities have had the same allowances for the past ten years

From April 2012 - November 2021:

- The cost of goods and services increased by 30.3% over this period⁴.
- Only four out of thirty-two local authorities have increased allowances to keep pace with inflation over the past 10 years.

⁴ Figures based on the Retail Price Index (RPI) as at November 2021. Available from: [Office for National Statistics](https://www.ons.gov.uk/).

5. Concluding comments and recommendations

These results show that the continuing delay in the introduction of a national allowance has had a direct impact on foster carers and the children they care for. Two-fifths of local authorities have not increased their allowances in the last five years whilst waiting for the implementation of a national allowance.

Children in foster care in Scotland are experiencing a postcode lottery of funding depending on their geographical location and as our State of the Nation's Foster Care report showed, in Scotland around half of foster carers state that the allowances they are given do not cover the costs of foster care, meaning foster carers must dip into their own pockets to meet the needs of children they are caring for on behalf of the state.

Despite over 10 years of commitments and with the best intentions to resolve this inequality, foster carers face yet another year of allowances that fall significantly below what is needed to meet the needs of children in foster care. 'The Promise' cannot be achieved without introducing and fully funding a national allowance and until a national minimum allowance is implemented, foster carers and the children they care for will continue to be directly negatively impacted by the delays.

Recommendation for Government:

- **The Scottish Government must introduce and fund a national minimum foster care allowance.** The levels should be set using up to date evidence to ensure that they cover the full costs of looking after a child.
- **A national minimum allowance should be introduced for Continuing Care arrangements** with such an allowance being set using up to date evidence to ensure it is sufficient to cover the cost of looking after a young person.

Recommendation for COSLA:

- **COSLA must work together with the Scottish Government to ensure all arrangements are in place to introduce the national allowance by April 2022.**

Recommendations for fostering services:

- Once a national minimum allowance is introduced, all fostering services should set their allowances at a level that meets or exceeds that national allowance. **No foster carer should have their allowance reduced.**
- **The administration of fostering payments must be transparent** so it is clear to foster carers how much money constitutes the allowance, and thus must be spent on the child, and how much is a payment given to the foster carer in recognition of their time, skills and experience.

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