



Scotland Foster Care Allowances Survey 2022-23

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 the foster care community.

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 meet the needs of the child or young person. This includes food, clothes, toiletries, travel and after school activities. 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'. This unfulfilled pledge is having a significant impact on children and young people in foster care and the families caring for them.

The Scottish Government continue to be in discussion with The [Convention of Scottish Local Authorities](#) (COSLA), on how to implement a national allowance, but progress continues to stall. We are in continued discussions with COSLA to understand how to progress this standstill.

To emphasise how much of an impact this delay has had, last year following our survey we compared local authorities allowances over a decade and found a significant number had frozen them, shockingly some for more than 10 years, while they wait for the national minimum to be implemented. You can read last year's report [here](#).

There cannot be any further delays in implementing a national minimum allowance. Despite over 10 years of commitment from the Scottish Government to introduce a national minimum allowance, children in care in Scotland continue to face a postcode lottery. The Government must ensure that all foster carers in Scotland receive the financial support required to meet children's needs and this standstill comes to end.

3. About this report

In the Autumn of 2022, 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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 2022-23

4.1 Overview

We collected data from all 32 local authorities in Scotland, 25 of which provided information on their Continuing Care allowances. As Scotland is the only country within the UK that does not set a national minimum allowance and to gain an indication of whether Scottish local authorities are giving foster carers sufficient allowances, we compare 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	£137-141	£156	£177	£207	
Wales	£200	£183	£183	£228	
Aberdeen City	137.44	156.55	194.90	237.05	237.05
Aberdeenshire	150.12	170.65	212.12	258.14	258.14
Angus Council	156.95	178.78	222.56	270.75	220.75
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	165.87
Dundee City	145.46	165.68	206.25	250.91	119.37
East Ayrshire	152.70	152.70	224.50	224.50	
East Dunbartonshire	128.22	146.05	181.81	221.13	221.21
East Lothian	114.45	133.70	157.98- 163.74	200.11	146.99
East Renfrewshire	139.41	158.80	197.71	240.47	167.19
Edinburgh	111.65	135.93	169.23- 173.96	208.76	208.76
Falkirk	137.18	156.26	194.53	226.84	
Fife	105.48	119.17	147.90	189.02	
Glasgow City	146.00	170.00	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	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	138.50	157.75	196.40	238.87	329.60
Renfrewshire	125.86	125.86	125.86	125.86	
Scottish Borders	136.52	136.52	204.74	204.74	204.74
Shetland Islands	145.00	165.17	205.62	250.14	250.14
South Ayrshire	164.85	164.85	197.35	229.85	
South Lanarkshire	139.33	158.72	197.56	240.30	
Stirling	137.08	156.15	194.39	236.42	179.31
West Dunbartonshire	150.85	171.65	213.25	260.10	
West Lothian	124.25	154.19	191.85	248.51	248.51

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 2022 by age group.

Age group	Below the National Minimum Allowance in Wales	Below the National Minimum Allowance in England
0-4	31	11
5-10	31	12
11-15	9	6
16-17	13	6

For the first time all 32 local authorities have set their allowances below the Welsh NMA for at least one age group and of these, 13 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 £6954.72 per child.** The range of allowances given for looking after children in the following age categories was:

- £77.69 to £200.00 per week for children aged 0-4
- £96.40 to £200.00 per week for children aged 5-10
- £120.00 to £240.40 per week for children aged 11 to 15
- £125.86 to £270.75 per week for children aged 16+

Table 3: Weekly allowances for children and young people in foster care in order from highest to lowest age groups (0-4) and (5-10)

Order	Local authority	(0-4)		Order	Local authority	(5-10)
1	North Ayrshire	200.00		1	North Ayrshire	200.00
2	Argyll & Bute	196.71		2	Argyll & Bute	196.71
3	South Ayrshire	164.85		3	Angus Council	178.78
4	Angus Council	156.95		4	West Dunbartonshire	171.65
5	East Ayrshire	152.70		5	Aberdeenshire	170.65
6	West Dunbartonshire	150.85		6	Glasgow City	170.00
7	Aberdeenshire	150.12		7	Dundee City	165.68
8	Glasgow City	146.00		8	Shetland Islands	165.17
9	Dundee City	145.46		9	South Ayrshire	164.85
10	Shetland Islands	145.00		10	Moray	162.73
11	Moray	142.86		11	Orkney Islands	162.73
12	Orkney Islands	142.86		12	North Lanarkshire	162.69
13	North Lanarkshire	142.82		13	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	160.00
14	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	140.00		14	East Renfrewshire	158.80
15	East Renfrewshire	139.41		15	South Lanarkshire	158.72
16	South Lanarkshire	139.33		16	Perth & Kinross	157.75
17	Perth & Kinross	138.50		17	Aberdeen City	156.55
18	Aberdeen City	137.44		18	Falkirk	156.26
19	Falkirk	137.18		19	Stirling	156.15
20	Stirling	137.08		20	West Lothian	154.19
21	Scottish Borders	136.52		21	Clackmannanshire	153.09
22	Clackmannanshire	134.40		22	East Ayrshire	152.70
23	Dumfries & Galloway	130.34		23	Dumfries & Galloway	148.47
24	East Dunbartonshire	128.22		24	East Dunbartonshire	146.05
25	Inverclyde	127.59		25	Inverclyde	145.34
26	Midlothian	126.00		26	Midlothian	140.00
27	Renfrewshire	125.86		27	Scottish Borders	136.52
28	West Lothian	124.25		28	Edinburgh	135.93
29	East Lothian	114.45		29	East Lothian	133.70

30	Edinburgh	111.65		30	Renfrewshire	125.86
31	Fife	105.48		31	Fife	119.17
32	Highland Council	77.69		32	Highland Council	96.40

Table 4: Weekly allowances for children and young people in foster care in order from highest to lowest age groups (0-4) and (5-10)

Order	Local authority	(11-15)		Order	Local authority	(16+)
1	Argyll & Bute	240.40		1	Angus Council	270.75
2	East Ayrshire	224.50		2	West Dunbartonshire	260.10
3	Angus Council	222.56		3	Aberdeenshire	258.14
4	West Dunbartonshire	213.25		4	Dundee City	250.91
5	Aberdeenshire	212.12		5	Shetland Islands	250.14
6	Dundee City	206.25		6	West Lothian	248.51
7	Shetland Islands	205.62		7	Moray	246.44
8	Scottish Borders	204.74		8	Orkney Islands	246.44
9	Moray	202.58		9	North Lanarkshire	246.33
10	Orkney Islands	202.58		10	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	242.00
11	North Lanarkshire	202.51		11	East Renfrewshire	240.47
12	North Ayrshire	200.00		12	Argyll & Bute	240.40
13	Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	199.00		13	South Lanarkshire	240.30
14	East Renfrewshire	197.71		14	Perth & Kinross	238.87
15	South Lanarkshire	197.56		15	Aberdeen City	237.05
16	South Ayrshire	197.35		16	Glasgow City	236.60
17	Perth & Kinross	196.40		17	Stirling	236.42
18	Aberdeen City	194.90		18	Clackmannanshire	231.79
19	Glasgow City	194.54		19	South Ayrshire	229.85
20	Falkirk	194.53		20	Falkirk	226.84
21	Stirling	194.39		21	Dumfries & Galloway	224.77
22	West Lothian	191.85		22	East Ayrshire	224.50
23	Clackmannanshire	190.58		23	East Dunbartonshire	221.13
24	Dumfries & Galloway	184.80		24	Inverclyde	220.05
25	East Dunbartonshire	181.81		25	Midlothian	217.00
26	Inverclyde	180.93		26	Edinburgh	208.76
27	Edinburgh	169.23- 173.96		27	Scottish Borders	204.74
28	Midlothian	162.00		28	East Lothian	200.11
29	East Lothian	157.98- 163.74		29	North Ayrshire	200.00
30	Fife	147.90		30	Fife	189.02
31	Renfrewshire	125.86		31	Highland Council	155.36
32	Highland Council	120.00		32	Renfrewshire	125.86

4.3. Continuing care

We received information on continuing care from 25 out of 31 local authorities. 8 out of 32 local authorities decreased the allowance for Continuing Care arrangements compared to those caring for young people aged 16+.

The continuing care allowances range also varied significantly within each band – with some foster carers receiving less than half of their counterparts in another area.

One local authority did not provide a continuing care allowance to their foster carers and some did so on a case by case basis.

4.4. Additional allowances

We also asked local authorities about the additional allowances that are available to all foster carers. 25 local authorities gave further information about the additional allowances foster carers can claim to meet the needs of children and young people for such as mileage, holidays, birthdays, Christmas and exceptional costs.

21 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.

21 local authorities said they pay additional expenses for mileage related to meeting children's needs, although the terms and rates varied.

One local authority didn't provide any additional expenses and some were able to receive these allowances, but would require foster carers to claim it on a yearly basis when needed.

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.

4.5. Over a decade of allowances

Last year, to emphasise how much of an impact the delay in implementing a national minimum allowance has had on looked after children and young people and the foster carers that support them, we compared local authorities allowances over a decade. We found a significant amount of local authorities had frozen their allowances, including some that had for 10 years, while waiting for a national minimum to be implemented. We have continued this again this year to reflect 11 years of frozen allowances.

Table 4: Frozen allowances over the last 11 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 11 years*	2022 - 2023	2021 - 2022	2020 - 2021	2019 - 2020	2018 - 2019	2017 - 2018	2016 - 2017	2015 - 2016	2014 - 2015	2013 - 2014	2012 - 2013
Aberdeen City	1	9.9%	137.44	137.44	135.41	135.41	131.47	131.47	130.17	130.17	128.88	127.60	125.09
Aberdeenshire	2	11.6%	150.12	150.12	150.12	147.18	145.72	144.28	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	134.49
Angus Council	0	22.6%	156.95	154.63	151.60	147.18	147.18	147.18	145.00	142.86	140.33	137.18	128.00
Argyll & Bute	7	0.0%	196.71	196.71	196.71	196.71	196.71	196.71	196.71	196.71			
Clackmannanshire	8	4.7%	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	134.40	131.37	128.42
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	7	44.6%	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00	96.82	96.82	96.82
Dumfries & Galloway	10	0.0%	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34	130.34
Dundee City	0	19.4%	145.46	143.67	141.89	140.14	157.56	136.70	135.01	133.34	130.97	130.32	121.82
East Ayrshire	5	26.8%	152.70	152.70	152.70	152.70	152.70	152.70	205.00	205.00	200.00	123.88	120.39

³ We have selected 0-4 age band for clarity of comparison (any annual increase will usually apply to all age bands).

East Dunbartonshire	7	2.5%	128.22	128.22	128.22	128.22	128.22	128.22	128.22	128.22	125.09	125.09	125.09
East Lothian	9	2.7%	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	114.45	111.44
East Renfrewshire	0	11.4%	139.41	136.68	132.70	128.84	125.09	125.09	125.09	125.09	125.09	125.09	125.09
Edinburgh	0	12.3%	111.65	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	137.18	134.49
Fife	0	23.67	105.48	102.91	100.40	97.95	95.56	93.23	92.31	91.40	89.61	87.42	85.29
Glasgow City	0	11.05	146.00	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	137.18	134.49	131.47
Highland Council	10	0.0%	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69	77.69
Inverclyde	8	2.0%	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	127.59	125.09	125.09
Midlothian	2	50.4%	126.00	126.00	126.00	100.00	100.32	100.32	100.32	100.32	100.32	99.33	83.77
Moray	7	6.2%	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	134.49
North Ayrshire	4	52.4%	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	131.26	131.26	131.26			
North Lanarkshire	5	9.2%	142.82	142.82	142.82	142.82	142.82	142.86	138.64	137.27	137.27	133.66	130.78
Orkney Islands	7	8.7%	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	131.47
Perth & Kinross	0	2.9%	138.50	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47	134.47
Renfrewshire	3	2.7%	125.86	125.86	125.86	125.86	108.79	108.00	122.59				
Scottish Borders	0	13.7%	136.52	132.54	127.40	127.40	123.68	123.68	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	120.05

Shetland Islands	5	-1.4%	145.00	145.00	145.00	145.00	145.00	145.00	147.00				
South Ayrshire	0	23.2%	164.85	154.35	154.35	147.00	147.00	145.00	139.33	139.33	136.87	133.79	
South Lanarkshire	5	6.2%	139.33	139.33	139.33	139.33	139.33	139.33	134.40	134.40	134.40	131.77	131.17
Stirling	2	6.7%	137.08	137.08	137.08	134.40	134.40	134.40	140.00	140.00	96.82	96.82	128.42
West Dunbartonshire	0	12.1%	150.85	147.90	145.00	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	142.86	140.33	137.18	134.49
West Lothian	0	62.2%	124.25	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 eleven local authorities increased their foster care allowances this year
- Nearly two-thirds of local authorities have frozen their allowances in the past year
- A third of fostering services had the same allowance for seven years
- Three local authorities have had the same allowances for ten years or over

From April 2012 – April 2022:

- The cost of goods and services increased by 25% over this period⁴.
- Only five 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

The Scottish Government have promised a national minimum allowance for over ten years and it has still not been implemented. They have committed to a national minimum allowance as part of their Promise Implementation Plan but have not provided a date for delivery. These results, which directly mirror last year's, again 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. Only a third of local authorities have increased their allowances this year and two-thirds are continuing to freeze their allowances while they wait 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. In a year, this difference can be as much as £6954.72 per child.

As our State of the Nation's Foster Care 2021 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. Inflation rates and the cost of living has significantly increases since 2021, and we are continually hearing from foster carers in Scotland and across the UK the difficulties they are facing, now more than ever.

Despite over ten years of commitments, 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. It should rise in line with inflation.
- **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.**

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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