



Wales Foster Care Allowances Survey 2022-23

1. Introduction

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

We work to ensure all fostered children and young people 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.

2. Background

All foster carers should receive a weekly fostering allowance from their fostering service when they have a child in their care. It should be designed to cover the full cost of caring for a fostered child. This includes food, clothes, toiletries, travel and all other expenses incurred which varies depending on the age of the child. Some foster carers also receive 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.

The Welsh Government publishes national minimum allowances (NMAs) for foster carers in Wales, with the expectation that all fostering services meet these amounts. Most local authorities give their foster carers at least this amount. However, we are concerned that a small number of local authorities choose to give a lower allowance, and each year we monitor this with freedom of information requests.

The Fostering Network have recently undertaken research into the true cost of caring for a child in foster care, using up to date evidence, to ensure our revised proposed allowances cover the full cost of caring for a child. Our calculations are based on the [Minimum Income Standard for the United Kingdom](#) and Nina Oldfield's '[The Adequacy of Foster Care Allowances](#)', which identifies the additional costs of caring for a child in foster care. Our calculations have been supported by Pro Bono Economics. We have compared the allowances set by local authorities with our new updated calculations. Our work forms a wider programme of reports to explore payments across the fostering sector.

3. About this report

In the summer of 2022, The Fostering Network conducted a survey of all 22 local authorities in Wales using freedom of information (FOI) requests. This report includes data from all local authorities in Wales, it does not report data in respect of independent or 3rd sector providers.

The local authorities were asked the following questions:

Question 1: Please could you tell me the total foster care allowance, including any additional allowances, e.g., holiday allowance, that are paid to foster carers on a weekly basis for all age bands in 2022-23. Do not include any fee/reward element for foster carers.

Question 2: Please could you tell me your 2022-23 weekly allowances for former foster carers looking after young people in 18+ When I am Ready arrangements, broken down by year 1, year 2, and year 3+ if necessary

Survey results for foster care allowances 2022-23

4.1. Overview

We collected data from all 22 local authorities in Wales. Each year new national minimum allowances are set and these are expected to cover the maintenance costs for looking after children. The NMA for foster carers in Wales increased by 3.37 per cent over the previous financial year. Table 1 shows this year's figures.

Table 1: National minimum allowances for Wales set by the Welsh Government for the year commencing 1 April 2022¹

Amount provided per week by age band			
0-4 years	5-10 years	11-15 years	16-18 years
£200.00	£183.00	£183.00	£228.00

4.2. Results

Below are the key findings and the full results of the survey (see Table 2).

¹ Welsh Government. National Minimum Allowances for Foster Carers 2020–2023. Available from: <https://www.flintshirefostering.org.uk/en/PDFs/National-Minimum-Allowances-for-Foster-Carers-2020-2023-English-letter.pdf>

Table 2: Allowances (per week) for foster carers looking after children and young people up to 18 years of age in Wales.

Boxes shaded in grey specify the national minimum allowance set by the Welsh Government and The Fostering Network's new recommended NMA.

Boxes shaded in blue indicate foster care allowances set below the national minimum allowance.

Boxes shaded in purple indicate the difference between the NMA being paid by the local authority and The Fostering Network's new recommended NMA.

Local authority	Age ranges							
	0-4 years		5-10 years		11-15 years		16-18 years	
Wales NMA	£200.00		£183.00		£183.00		£228.00	
The Fostering Network recommended NMA	£215.00		£258.00		£324.00		£324.00	
Blaenau Gwent	200.00	- 15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00
Bridgend	214.00	- 1.00	195.81	- 62.19	195.81	- 128.19	243.96	- 80.04
Caerphilly	200.00	-15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00
Cardiff	194.00	- 21.00	181.81	- 76.19	181.81	- 142.19	228.00	- 96.00
Carmarthenshire	230.00	+ 15.00	225.00	- 33.00	225.00	- 99.00	260.00	- 64.00
Ceredigion	210.00	- 5.00	203.00	- 55.00	213.00	- 111.00	268.00	- 56.00
Conwy	200.00	- 15.00	182.00	- 76.00	205.00	- 119.00	228.00	- 96.00
Denbighshire	200.00	- 15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00
Flintshire	200.00	- 15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00
Gwynedd	200.00	- 15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00

Isle of Anglesey	200.28	- 14.72	181.97	- 76.03	205.75	- 118.25	249.68	- 74.32
Merthyr Tydfil	200.00	- 15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00
Monmouthshire	222.00	+ 7.00	195.00	- 63.00	195.00	- 129.00	240.00	- 84.00
Neath Port Talbot	205.80	- 9.20	189.34	- 68.66	190.42	- 133.58	236.94	- 87.06
Newport	200.00	- 15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00
Pembrokeshire	194.00	- 21.00	177.00	- 81.00	190.00	- 134.00	231.66	- 92.34
Powys	232.34	+ 17.34	232.34	- 25.76	232.34	- 91.66	232.34	- 91.66
Rhondda Cynon Taff	200.00	- 15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00
Swansea	210.00	- 5.00	193.00	- 65.00	215.00	- 109.00	238.00	- 86.00
Torfaen County	200.00	- 15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00
Vale of Glamorgan	200.00	- 15.00	183.00	- 75.00	183.00	- 141.00	228.00	- 96.00
Wrexham	200.06	- 14.94	183.05	- 74.95	183.05	- 140.95	228.06	- 95.94

Key findings:

Four local authorities in Wales are paying below the national minimum allowance level set by the Welsh Government in some age categories.

Foster carers looking after children aged:

- 0 to 4 received a range of £194.00 to £232.34
- 5 to 10 received a range of £177.00 to £232.34
- 11 to 15 received a range of £181.81 to £232.34
- 16 to 18 received a range of £228.00 to £268.00

4.3. When I am Ready arrangements

Table 3: Former foster carer allowances paid per week in When I am Ready arrangements compared with allowances given to foster carers looking after young people aged 16 to 18.

Boxes shaded in blue indicate where former foster care allowances decreased when a placement changed to a When I am Ready arrangement.

Boxes marked with an asterix (*) indicate where the young person is expected to contribute and/or claim some kind of benefit and this is included in the amount.

Local authority	16-18 years	When I am Ready
Blaenau Gwent	228.00	203.00*
Bridgend	243.96	185.00*
Caerphilly	228.00	208.00*
Cardiff	228.00	208.00*
Carmarthenshire	260.00	200.00
Ceredigion	268.00	Case by case basis
Conwy	228.00	228.00*
Denbighshire	228.00	228.00
Flintshire	228.00	Didn't provide
Gwynedd	228.00	228.00
Isle of Anglesey	249.68	202.98
Merthyr Tydfil	228.00	140.00
Monmouthshire	240.00	160.00*
Neath Port Talbot	236.94	228.00
Newport	228.00	208.00*
Pembrokeshire	231.66	216.10
Powys	232.34	206.00
Rhondda Cynon Taff	228.00	170.00
Swansea	238.00	Didn't provide
Torfaen County	228.00	228.00
Vale of Glamorgan	228.00	Didn't provide
Wrexham	228.06	228.00*

Since April 2016, fostered young people in Wales have had the right to stay with their foster families up to age 21, if both parties agree to a When I am Ready arrangement. A When I am Ready arrangement is not the same as a foster care placement. The young person, who must be a former fostered child, is no longer a looked after child. They are a young adult and a care leaver. They are entitled to support as a care leaver and will be allocated a personal advisor. The foster carer is no longer acting in the capacity of a foster carer for that young adult; they are their 'former foster carer'. These arrangements require local authorities in Wales to facilitate, monitor and support When I am Ready arrangements for fostered young people.

There is no recommended national minimum allowances for former foster carers in When I am Ready arrangements and local authorities have been known to calculate the amount on a case-by-case basis.

Key findings:

Four local authorities did not provide their allowances provided in When I'm Ready arrangements.

- When I am Ready allowances provided to cover the costs of caring for the young person ranged from £70.25 to £228 per week. Over the course of just one year, this amounts to a significant difference of over £7,500.
- Thirteen local authorities decrease the allowances set from when the young person was in foster care to when they enter a When I am Ready arrangement.
- One local authority provided a retainer payment whilst the young person was not in placement i.e. due to being at university.
- Eight local authorities stated that the allowance given to former foster carers depended on the contribution the young person could make. Where young people were expected to contribute, this was usually at £20 per week.

4.3. Concluding comments and recommendations

The Welsh Government's national minimum allowance is an essential tool to guide fostering services in offering a basic level of allowance to cover the cost of caring for fostered children, and it is unacceptable that any fostering service sets their allowance lower than this Government minimum.

Even though the majority of local authorities in Wales are paying at or above the national minimum allowance we know from our State of the Nation's Foster Care 2021 report that over a third of foster carers stated that their allowances 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 the difficulties they are facing, now more than ever.

We are calling on the Government to urgently fund foster care and increase the national minimum allowance to ensure it reflects the true cost of looking after a child in foster care. You can read more about our call [here](#).

Recommendation for fostering services:

- All fostering services should set their allowances for the child at a level that meets the Welsh Government's published rates.
- 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 constitutes the fee and is a payment given for the foster carer's time and skills.

Recommendations for Government:

- The Welsh Government should undertake a comprehensive review of the minimum levels of fostering allowances, using up to date evidence, to ensure that foster carers are given sufficient payment that values their unique and critical expertise and skillset and to ensure allowances truly cover the full costs of looking after a child. We recommend utilising our methodology and research to inform these levels.
- All fostering services in Wales should be monitored to ensure that they are paying at the agreed national level to ensure consistency and best practice.
- When I am Ready minimum allowances for foster carers should be introduced and funded across Wales, with such an allowance being sufficient to cover the cost of looking after a young person.
- The implementation of the When I am Ready policy should be monitored to ensure practice is in line with national requirements and to share learning from best practice models.
- All allowance payments in respect of fostering should be subject to annual increase in line with the recognised Minimum Income Standards.