

2. Allowances for foster carers

All foster carers receive an allowance to care for the children in their care. Each year, we publish recommended rates for these allowances that cover the full cost of caring for a child based on extensive analysis with economists. The current National Minimum Allowance in Wales is much lower than this in all age categories despite multiple commitments from the previous administration to review these in line with our recommended rates. We understand the final report of the review fostering allowances conducted by Foster Wales is currently being reviewed by Welsh Government. In order to recruit and retain foster carers, and care for children and young people properly, we hope you will be able to join us in campaigning for foster carer allowances to be increased in line with our recommended rates.

3. Fees for foster carers

Fee payments should be made on top of allowances to recognise a foster carers' time, skills and experience. While all foster carers receive an allowance, there is no requirement for fee payments to be made. As a result, only around 50 per cent of foster carers (UK-wide) receive a fee or 'reward' element for the work that they do caring for children, and the amount varies hugely. Usually fee-paid carers receive payment only when they have a child in placement. We are calling for all foster carers to be paid a fair fee that is clearly separated from the allowance amount and would appreciate the Committees support in this. We can provide a more detailed briefing on both fees and allowances, should you require it.

4. National register for foster carers

We have been working to take forward the Welsh Government commitment in summer 2023 to scope out the recommendation from the Radical Reform Inquiry to create a national register for foster carers. It has again been committed to being explored within the amendment stages of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill, though it has been made clear that this will not be part of the Bill. A register would address the need to increase the status of foster carers in the team around the child; the difficulty of foster carers moving from one service to another; and the need for more robust safeguarding measures in the fostering sector. We hope, as a Committee, you will recognise the importance of this commitment and take forward this recommendation urgently.

5. Post-18 care

We believe that all young people in foster care should have the opportunity to remain living with their carers after the age of 18 in order to make a smooth and supported transition into adulthood. However, we hear from foster carers and young people in foster care that the 'When I am Ready' scheme it is not working as it should for either of them . We are calling on the new Government to honour the

commitment to review 'When I am Ready' in line with the Radical Reform Inquiry recommendation to remove the financial and operational barriers to this scheme, and would appreciate your support in this.

6. Fostering Wellbeing

We also wanted to draw your attention to one of our current programmes, which we will be showcasing at our event in May. Since 2019 we have been delivering Fostering Wellbeing across Wales, a multi-disciplinary programme bringing together all the professionals involved in supporting children who are looked after, including foster carers. Fostering Wellbeing encourages professionals to work together, with a focus on improving wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. We work in partnership with Foster Wales to recruit foster carers as 'pioneers', experienced foster carers who receive training and support to become peer mentors and leaders of good practice within their service. Rhondda Cynon Taf, our partner for the local authority pilot of Fostering Wellbeing from 2017-2019, has our most active and engaged Pioneer group, and is our model for good practice as we develop the Pioneer network across Wales.

Thank you for considering these critical issues for children in foster care. We would welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss how we can continue to collaborate to improve foster care for children, young people, and foster carers in Wales, and to discuss our upcoming event.

Edrychaf ymlaen at glywed gennych,

Yr eiddoch yn gywir,

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