

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE
CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S MEETING WITH EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

28 March 2023

2023/2024 FOSTER CARER PAYMENTS INCREASE

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To agree Allowances, Premiums and Fees for 2023/24.

2.0 NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 At the end of May 2022 'The independent review of children's social care / Final report' by Josh MacAlister was published.

2.2 In 'Chapter Five: Transforming care' there is a Section (5.1) titled 'A New Deal on Fostering'. The three associated recommendations are:

- 1) National recruitment programme for foster carers
- 2) New support structure for foster carers
- 3) Delegated authority by default

This is not the appropriate report in which to critique Section 5.1 but there is no direct reference to payment rates. This is likely to be due to the report having to embrace the full market of Foster Carers and the IFAs (Independent Fostering Agencies) already pay their Foster Carers higher Fees.

2.3 In 2017/18, 60% of fostering arrangements were with Local Authorities, 40% with IFAs. By 2021/22, this had changed to 55% were with Local Authorities, 45% with IFAs. Thus, there is a national trend that is nearing a tipping point of most fostering arrangements switching to IFAs. The source of this data is the annual Ofsted/National Statistics 'Fostering in England 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022' report published on 10 November 2022 that can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fostering-in-england-1-april-2021-to-31-march-2022/fostering-in-england-1-april-2021-to-31-march-2022>

2.4 North Yorkshire currently bucks this trend with 99% of North Yorkshire's children in care who are living in foster carer living with Fostering North Yorkshire Foster Carers. It is understood that North Yorkshire has the highest percentage in the country of children in care living in the care of their 'in house' Foster Carers. There are great benefits to this, most notably keeping children close to their networks and roots and also generally facilitating a good education and effective health care.

2.5 However, the Fostering Service is aware of some Foster Carers considering transferring to IFAs (with one household planning to transfer in early 2023). (Also, another household has recently transferred to Redcar and Cleveland Fostering

Service because Redcar and Cleveland now pay the Council Tax of their Foster Carers.)

- 2.6 The proportion of Enquiries being received by IFAs in comparison to Local Authorities is also increasing. In 2017/18, 70% of Enquiries went to IFAs and by 2021/22, this had risen to 78%. However, there is an important context to add to these statistics. In the year ending March 2022, 1 in 23 Enquiries to IFAs converted to a new, fully approved Fostering Household, whereas for Local Authorities this conversion rate was 1 in 8. Both sectors have seen a fall in Enquiries overall.
- 2.7 The response from the government to the MacAlister report was published at the beginning of February 2023, the response is part feedback and part further consultation exercises. With respect to Foster Carer payments, the response does reference an above inflation increase (of 12.43%) of the National Minimum Allowance (NMA) payments to Foster Carers. However, North Yorkshire has always made paid more than the NMA payment levels.

3.0 LOCAL CONTEXT – INCREASED RATE OF DEREGISTRATIONS, LOW NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES AND VERY HIGH OCCUPANCY

- 3.1 During 2021 there was an increased rate of Foster Carers deregistering/retiring. The main reasons given for deregistrations are:

- Retirement
- Changes in family situation (no longer have a spare bedroom and/or supporting own grandchildren more)
- Ill health

However, there does also appear to be a link with the timing of the peak in deregistrations with the impact and repercussions of the COVID-19 virus pandemic. This is a phenomenon also experienced by other Local Authority Fostering Services in the region.

- 3.2 Unfortunately, the Fostering North Yorkshire Service is now receiving a consistently low number of Enquiries from people considering fostering. Only an average of about three Enquiries a week are being received, the target is 10 Enquiries a week. This is of significant concern because there are currently not enough new Foster Carers being assessed to sustain the required capacity levels for future demand. The downturn seems to have really begun around Quarter 1 (April/May/June) 2022. This timing may be because of the start of the war in Ukraine and associated steep rise in the cost of living linked to fuel prices.
- 3.3 There is very focused work with the Corporate Communications Team with respect to marketing and recruitment but despite best efforts, no real increase in Enquiries is resulting. There are several possible hypotheses as to the cause of the low Enquiry numbers:
- Uncertain global/national context – not the time to make a big decision maybe?
 - Cost of Living – many two income families cannot maintain lifestyle and afford to become Foster Carers. It is worthy of note here that historically, Local Authority Fostering Services have probably maintained a reliance upon there being somebody at home all the time (traditionally this would have been a Housewife). There are no longer many such families and so a lot of potential new applicants to fostering are seeking a replacement second income

- Less 'empty nesters' – less children can afford to leave home
- Potential 'empty nesters' are offering more care to their Grandchildren to offset the cost of childcare for their children
- People in their 50s are taking a 'Golden Gap Year'
- Some households may have offered Homes for Ukrainians instead of becoming Foster Carers
- Other reasons for no longer having a spare bedroom, eg. space has been converted into a home office or is being utilised to generate some income as an 'Air B&B'
- Dissatisfaction among existing carers (as outlined in the Foster Carers' Petition – please see section 4 below) is negatively impacting on Enquiries generated by word of mouth. The associated news stories on BBC Look North (broadcast and on the Website) may also have deterred people more generally to make Enquiries

3.4 At the same time as only receiving a low number of Enquiries, the occupancy rate of current Foster Carers is now very high. There are two categories of Foster Carers:

- Family and Friend Foster Carers – these are Foster Carers who have a connection to the child/children in some way, often Grandparents or Aunts/Uncles. Family and Friend Foster Carers can only care for the specific, named child/children in their Foster Carer approval. Currently there are 74 Family and Friend Fostering Households
- Unrelated Foster Carers – these are Foster Carers who have no previous connection to the children in their care and their Foster Carer approval will be for any child/children. Currently there are 157 unrelated Fostering Households

Thus, it is the unrelated Fostering Households that can accommodate any child/young person and it is therefore the percentage of the occupied available beds in unrelated Fostering Households that is utilised for the calculation of occupancy. Since April 2022, occupancy has been running at 96%-99%.

3.5 A consequence of the high occupancy is that at any given time there are only two to three households with any space for new admissions into care. There is then a compounding increased cost factor which is that the chance of an available household being in the correct location in proximity to the child's/young person's school becomes increasingly unlikely and therefore in turn creates significantly higher transport costs.

4.0 LOCAL CONTEXT – FOSTER CARERS' PETITION

4.1 Over the past 18 months some Fostering North Yorkshire Foster Carers have joined the IWGB (Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain) and via the local Foster Carer Associations ran a Survey of all Foster Carers (that was co-ordinated by the IWGB) from 3-16 May 2022.

4.2 Then on the 16 September 2022, a Petition was submitted to the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Elected Member for Children. A meeting of four Foster Carers with the Lead Elected Member, Director and Assistant Director for Children and Families took place on 14 October 2022.

4.3 On the 8 December 2022 the final Petition was submitted to the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Elected Member for Children by the IWGB Fostering Branch Chair. (For the final version of the Foster Carers' Petition, please see Appendix 1.)

The closed petition had 133 signatories that form a majority of the cohort of North Yorkshire's unrelated Foster Carers. An initial written response to the concerns raised in the meeting that took place on 14 October 2022 and in the Petition was shared by the Assistant Director with Foster Carers at the 16 December 2022 County Foster Carers' Group meeting.

- 4.4 In October 2022 Fostering North Yorkshire carried out an exercise to compare payment rates for Foster Carers in neighbouring/regional (and a couple further away) Local Authorities. The payment rates made by North Yorkshire were on a similar level as most other Local Authorities. The exception being with respect to a comparison with Bradford who were paying more.
- 4.5 However, many of the concerns raised in the petition are with reference to Foster Carers not receiving enough money to care well and asserting therefore Foster Carers are effectively subsidising the cost of caring for Looked After Children for North Yorkshire County Council.
- 4.6 An early partially written draft of the options appraisal report was shared with Foster Carers at the County Foster Carers' Group (CFCG) meeting held on Friday 3 February 2023. Subsequently, wider, more representative groups of Foster Carers (drawn from those that had signed the petition) met on Wednesday 8 February 2023. Feedback via two Foster Carers from the CFCG offered some general impressions from these wider discussions. Feedback per option was not straight forward because options have different impacts upon Foster Carers dependent upon their own individual circumstances. Consequentially, this should not be regarded as a formal consultation process. More general feedback was:
- There was a significant level of unrest amongst the Foster Carers present, generally linked to feeling undervalued – financially under compensated and generally under supported
 - In order to counter the cost of living crisis, options need to be adopted that have the greatest universal benefit across all types of Foster Carers
 - The current work underway as outlined in this report should be viewed as the first stage of a process that should develop over the coming months and that financing of the Fostering Service needs to be developed over future years
 - Points with financial implications continue to be raised by carers, including some that are not explored within this report
 - Carers are concerned about their numbers dwindling as the current cohort leave to join other Fostering Agencies, seek employment or retire. This risks placing intolerable pressures on those that remain and their Fostering Social Workers. These impacts seem likely, at least in the short term, to outweigh any success in recruiting new Foster Carers

5.0 FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE

- 5.1 In an ever evolving western culture where people living in couples generally now need and expect a dual income to maintain desired living standards, then the status of fostering becomes a fundamental, key question. Should fostering be a voluntary role (hopefully supported by good expense payments) or should it be a paid role that should replace an income equivalent to employment?
- 5.2 Currently the market has tended to polarise with Local Authorities pursuing the voluntary model and the IFAs adopting more of an income replacing position. The government has always been clear that Foster Carers should not be out of pocket

financially (although this is open to interpretation) but of course the whole situation has now been considerably exacerbated by the rapid rise in the cost of living.

- 5.3 In November 2022 Ofsted published a report called: 'How local authorities plan for sufficiency of accommodation that meets the needs of children in care and care leavers'. There is a quote in the report that succinctly summarises the current recruitment challenges linked to the cost of living challenges:

'I'm sure there are loads of people out there who would make fantastic foster carers but actually, with the kind of young people and the trauma they have experienced and the needs they've got, you probably do need someone around 24/7 and many people now cannot afford to be around 24/7.'

(Fostering Service Manager)

Current Payment Structure for Fostering North Yorkshire Foster Carers

6.0 ALLOWANCES AND PREMIUM/FEEES

- 6.1 All Foster Carers receive an age banded Allowance (sometime referred to as 'Basic' an in 'Basic Allowance') to care for a child/young person.
- 6.2 In addition, Accredited Foster Carers are paid an age banded Premium per child.
- 6.3 Fees are paid to Advanced and Specialist Foster Carers who are a combined small cohort of about 40 Fostering Households who are asked to care for our Looked After Children with more complex needs (who are likely to be excluded from school). Thus, for Specialist Foster Carers there is an expectation that a carer is available 24/7 and the Specialist Fee does become an income replacing payment.
- 6.4 There are several other payments made to Foster Carers for things like Birthdays, Festivals and Holidays, initial Clothing Allowance including some School clothing Grants.

7.0 USUAL ANNUAL PAYMENT INCREASES TO FOSTERING NORTH YORKSHIRE FOSTER CARERS

- 7.1 Since 2016 the formula adopted for annual increases to all payments to Foster Carers in April has been the rate of CPI inflation in the previous December. Prior to this the recommendations of payment rates made by The Fostering Network (the national charity that independently supports Foster Carers) were always adopted by the Fostering North Yorkshire Service. (The Fostering Network stopped recommending specific rates in 2016 because they felt that house prices had become too diverse across the UK for a national recommendation to work. They then recommended that payments should be increased annually by inflation but did not recommend which measurement of inflation to utilise.)
- 7.2 So, on 1 April 2022 payments were increased by 5.4%. Due to the rapid rise in the cost of living, North Yorkshire County Council took the extraordinary step of making a further increase to Foster Carer payments from 1 October 2022 of an additional 3.8% (which topped up payments to the equivalent of 9.4% of 2021/22 payment rates).

CURRENT AND POSSIBLE NEW FOSTER CARER PAYMENT OPTIONS

8.0 ALLOWANCES

8.1 This section focuses upon payment options for the age banded Allowance that is paid to Foster Carers per child (to pay for the costs directly associated with caring for the child/young person). Four categories are outlined as follow. The CPI category would be the usual annual uplift and so would not be judged as a new or additional payment but is utilised here as the baseline by which to judge the additional increase that the other options offer. Section 8 needs to be considered at the same time as section 9 because the weekly Foster Carer payment is always made up of a combination of Allowances and Premiums or Fees (that are covered in section 8).

8.2a **CPI applied to April 2022 payment levels:**

The status quo/baseline position would be to increase all April 2022 level Allowances (and Premiums and Fees, see also below) on 1 April 2023 by the rate of CPI inflation in December 2022.

8.2b **CPI applied to October 2022 payment levels:**

Increasing Allowances by the rate of CPI inflation in December 2022 but applied to the current payment rates introduced in October 2022.

Recent feedback from Foster Carers is that this would enable them to stop playing catch up with fast moving changes in the cost of living.

8.3 **RPI:** Instead of increasing all Allowances by the rate of CPI inflation in December 2022 the RPI index could be utilised instead. Generally, RPI runs higher than CPI (in December 2022 RPI was 2.9% higher). This is an option that the Foster Carers' Petition specifically asked to be considered.

If RPI was adopted as the inflation index to utilise, it would then need to be decided if this should continue in all subsequent years.

8.4 **Lift to new The Fostering Network 'benchmark':**

In 2022 The Fostering Network published a brief paper called 'Fair funding for children in foster care' (this document is in Appendix 2a with supporting information in Appendix 2b). The Fostering Network have researched what they think are now realistic costs to care for children living in foster carer. These are:

Age	Recommended Weekly Fostering Allowance
0-4	£215
5-10	£258
11-15	£324
16+	£324

It is worthy of note that to date North Yorkshire County Council has followed the recommendations made by The Fostering Network to set the payment rates for Fostering North Yorkshire Foster Carers. If this option was adopted, then it is assumed that subsequent annual increase would remain with following the CPI measurement of inflation.

9.0 ACCREDITED PREMIUMS AND ADVANCED/SPECIALIST FEES

9.1 This section focuses upon payment options for the child/age banded Accredited Premium (paid per child) and the Advanced or Specialist Fee paid per Fostering Household. Four categories are outlined as follow. The CPI category would be the usual annual uplift and so would not be judged as a new or additional payment but is utilised here as the baseline by which to judge the additional increase that the other options offer. Section 9 needs to be considered at the same time as section 8 because the weekly Foster Carer payment is always made up of a combination of Allowances (that are covered in section 7) and Premiums or Fees.

9.2a CPI applied to April 2022 payment levels:

Similar for Allowances (as above), the status quo/baseline position would be to increase all April 2022 level Premiums and Fees on 1 April 2023 by the rate of CPI inflation in December 2022.

9.2b CPI applied to October 2022 payment levels:

Increasing Premiums and Fees by the rate of CPI inflation in December 2022 but applied to the current payment rates introduced in October 2022.

Recent feedback from Foster Carers is that this would enable them to stop playing catch up with fast moving changes in the cost of living.

9.3 **RPI:** Instead of increasing all Premiums and Fees by the rate of CPI inflation in December 2022 the RPI index could be utilised instead. Generally, RPI runs higher than CPI (in December 2022 RPI was 2.9% higher). This is an option that the Foster Carers' Petition specifically asked to be considered

If RPI was adopted as the inflation index to utilise, it would then need to be decided if this should continue in all subsequent years.

9.4 One off uplift:

The Premiums and Fees could be increased by a 'one off uplift' of 25%. This would increase the financial resource to support the Foster Carers' own living costs.

If this option was adopted, then it is assumed that subsequent annual increases would remain with following the CPI measurement of inflation.

9.5 Increase the Accredited Premium by 15%:

Advanced and Specialist Fees remain competitive Fee payments regionally. However, from the local benchmarking exercise carried out in October 2022 (as in Appendix 2) it can be seen that the Accredited Premium payment is potentially starting to fall behind other similar payments made by neighbouring Local Authorities. To regain a lead would require a 15% increase in the Accredited Premium payment.

10.0 ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

10.1 This section covers seven additional options as a means by which to give greater financial support to Foster Carers separate from Allowances, Premiums and Fees.

10.2 Introduction of bridging payments to Accredited Foster Carers:

This is another option that the Foster Carers' Petition specifically asked to be considered. The proposal would be to align Accredited Foster Carers with the arrangements currently in place for Advanced and Specialist Foster Carers and pay a bridging payment for the maximum of a three week duration.

Payment for Accredited Foster Carers would be against a vacancy against the Fostering Household's usual number of children accommodated as recorded in the Guide Matching Range. This option would not be applicable to Short Break or Sleepover/Respite Foster Carers.

10.3 Introduction of an Activity Fund:

An idea generated by discussions with Foster Carers following the submission of the Petition is could an Activity Fund be introduced? This would be to facilitate activities for children and young people. The proposal would be to allow an annual budget of £300 to be accessed by Foster Carers for the sole purpose of paying for children and young people to participate in activities throughout the year. An automatic payment of £100 would be made at the beginning of each school term (thus 3 x £100 = £300).

10.4a Pay the first 100 Miles of transport:

Currently the first 100 miles of mileage (per month) involving transporting a child/young person cannot be claimed by Foster Carers. This is because there is a 'Travel' component within the Allowance for the child. An option that the Foster Carers' Petition specifically asked to be considered is to instigate the payment of this first 100 miles.

A consequence of not paying for the first 100 miles of travel is that many Foster Carers are now not agreeing to transport children/young people. Given the analysis in section 2.5, it is understood that the demand on other transport budgets has significantly increased already. Paying Foster Carers for the first 100 miles may therefore reduce the already increased costs in other transport budgets. (A recent example of a quote from a Taxi firm to transport a child 17 miles return journey to and from school was £123 a day – this equates to over £7 a mile.)

10.4b Pay the first 100 Miles of transport and remove 'Travel' component from the Allowance:

Ditto above but at the same time removing the associated 'Travel' component from the Allowance.

This option would introduce a fairer system overall for all Foster Carers. This is because some Foster Carers do not have to transport children/young people very much and yet currently still receive the same 'Travel' component in the Allowance. However, a counter argument would be that some travel costs are for things like bus, train and taxi fares and thus the 'Travel' component should not be removed from the Allowance to facilitate payment of such journeys.

10.5 Pay Foster Carers' Council Tax:

This is another option that the Foster Carers' Petition specifically asked to be considered. Some Local Authorities have been doing this for several years – notably Manchester and several London Boroughs. More locally, Redcar and Cleveland introduced payment of Foster Carers' Council Tax in 2022. It is also known that in our region both Leeds and Bradford have written papers

to request payment of Council Tax to their Foster Carers. The proposal would be to pay up to a maximum of 75% of Council Tax after three years of fostering, commencing at 25% in year one, 50% in year two and then 75% thereafter. Foster Carers who offer care maybe one or two weekends a month (eg. Short Break Foster Carers for disabled children) would need to receive a proportionate, pro rata payment etc. The administration of these arrangements would be in danger of becoming a significant administration task. One way to avoid this would be to make a payment equivalent to the average Council Tax bill – for the 25%, 50% and 75% of Council Tax this would equate to £500, £1,000 and £1,500

As Fostering North Yorkshire is a Local Authority Fostering Agency, there is also a unique recruitment opportunity associated with making a payment to Foster Carers specifically to be put towards their Council Tax. This is an option that is less marketable to the IFAs. When translated into average payments then the marketing perspective becomes less direct. However, a benefit of the proposed payment method is that it is progressive.

10.6 **Include Foster Carers in the Vivup Everybody Benefits scheme:**

Some Local Authorities include their Foster Carers in their staff benefit schemes. This would be an effective way for Foster Carers to access helpful discounts on groceries and other things.

An additional merit to this option is that it more closely aligns Foster Carers to the perks that staff can access.

10.7 **Introduction of a 'Recommend a Friend' and 'Golden Hello' scheme:**

The proposal would be to reward a current Fostering Household with a one off £500 payment if they recommended somebody/a couple to become a Foster Carer/s. The £500 would be given when the new Fostering Household was approved. The new Fostering Household would also receive a £500 welcome, 'Golden Hello' payment. (To be equitable, any new Fostering Household recruited would also receive a £500 'Golden Hello'.)

This scheme would hopefully serve to fully enhance Foster Carer recruitment by word of mouth.

11.0 **MANAGEMENT BOARD CONSIDERATIONS AND OUTCOME**

11.1 There were two key risks that needed to be carefully considered, balanced and mitigated against:

- 1) What is the level of additional payment required to secure retention of existing Foster Carers?
- 2) What is the level of additional payment required to meaningfully assist with the recruitment of new Foster Carers to meet future demand?

11.2 The outcome of Management Board was to proceed to CYPS Exec. Members with the Recommendations as outlined in the next two sections.

12.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS – MAINTAINING CPI**

12.1 To raise Allowances, Premiums and Fees on 1 April 2023 by the rate of December CPI inflation applied to April 2022 payment levels (as per options 8.2a and 9.2a).

12.2 Thereafter to continue to annually increase all payments by the CPI rate of inflation. The reason being that at some point in the medium term future the cost of living will restabilise. Whilst this is likely to be a stabilisation at a generally higher cost of living, inflation should stabilise and return to a lower rate.

13.0 RECOMMENDATIONS – ACCREDITED PREMIUM INCREASE AND ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

13.1 To address and mitigate against the retention and recruitment risks of Foster Carers to further implement an attractive package of increased payments as below:

	Payment Option	Rationale/Benefit
Accredited Premiums and Advanced/Specialist Fees	9.5) Increase the Accredited Premium by 15% (£68K)	To maintain a positive competitive edge with Local Authority neighbours in the region
Additional Options	10.2) Introduction of bridging payments to Accredited Foster Carers (£57K)	Brings Accredited and Advanced/Specialist foster carers into alignment
	10.4a) Pay the first 100 Miles of transport (£154K)	Likely overall efficiency gains to car travel costs currently being paid at higher rates (eg. for taxi companies) out of other travel budgets
	10.6) Include Foster Carers in the Vivup Everybody Benefits scheme (£18K)	Aligns the benefits that staff and Foster Carers can receive
	10.7) Introduction of a 'Recommend a Friend' and 'Golden Hello' scheme (£20K)	Enhances Foster Carer recruitment by word of mouth

The total additional cost of the above recommended package is: £317K

13.2 Additionally, to keep Foster Carer payments under constant review. This review to be mindful of the impact of additional payments on both retention and recruitment.

Alan Tucker
Placement and Fostering Manager
Zoe Inman
Accountant

March 2023

14.0 Appendices

No.	Appendix
1	Foster Carers' Petition
2a	Fair funding for children in foster care, The Fostering Network
2b	The Cost of Fostering – calculations for our proposed new allowance levels

Dear Councillor Janet Sanderson (Executive Member Children's Services), & Stuart Carlton (Director of Children's Services),

133 people have signed a petition on Action Network telling you to A petition for change from North Yorkshire Foster Carers.

Here is the petition they signed:

Our Message: North Yorkshire's foster carers call upon the County Council - as the Corporate Parent for care-experienced children in North Yorkshire - to take action to improve the conditions of the foster care system for young people in care. We want to be able to provide the best possible care for young people but this is only possible if the needs and opinions of foster carers are listened to.

The Issues: Foster care workers look after some of the most vulnerable children in our communities, providing them with safe homes and a supportive environment. Currently, the system is failing carers and young people. As the cost of living crisis bites, we are in urgent need of increased support from North Yorkshire Council. In May 2022, we conducted an extensive survey of foster carers in North Yorkshire who told us that;

- Only 15% of carers believed that the cost allowance always covered the costs they incur, that was before the cost of living crisis struck in earnest.
- Only 7% of carers would recommend to families and friends fostering with North Yorkshire County Council without any reservation.
- A quarter of the foster carers surveyed felt that they were usually or always unable to advocate for the children placed with them.
- Half of the foster carers surveyed felt they were unable to always advocate fully for the children placed with them.
- Less than 1 in 10 foster carers felt their views were given equal consideration to those of the social worker team.
- Nearly half of foster carers felt their safety was given little or no weighting in placement decisions.

These issues need to be urgently addressed. They are impacting our ability to provide the best possible care for young people in an environment where we feel safe and respected. Currently, carers are relying on their own funds to subsidise deficits and this is becoming an increasingly untenable position. If there is no action taken we fear skilled and experienced foster carers will leave the service because they are not able to afford to do it either financially or emotionally. This will increase the pressure on remaining carers and placements making it even harder for everyone, not least the children we care passionately about.

The Action that Needs to be Taken:

That is why we are asking the Council to improve conditions for carers, including the following measures:

- Emergency increase in fees and allowances in line with CPI inflation to be moved forward;
- Full financial recompense for uniforms, equipment and all expenditure on school-related activities. A stronger commitment to ring-fence the pupil premium payments made to schools; - Access to Free school meals for all fostered children;
- Free access to all Council leisure activities for carers and all their children irrespective of the provider of those services;
- A full review of the inflation indices used to review fostering fees, allowances and expenses. In the meantime, the CPI link should be retained;
- Removal of the 100 mile threshold for mileage;
- Introduction of bridging payments between placements for all carers;
- Full training, including refresher training, on all allowances, fees, expenses, paid and unpaid leave and state benefits to ensure that all carers can take full advantage of all approved entitlements. This should include a full explanation of the career structures within the fostering service, enabling carers to move between bandings as their changing circumstances permit;
- Exemption from Council Tax for carer households;
- Union recognition for IWGB Fosters Care Workers Branch.

The Council gets extremely good value for money from its foster carers, we are amongst the most cost-effective in the country. We believe that this will continue to be true even with these changes. These changes will ensure that foster carers are not forced to continue subsidising costs and that care experienced young people will have access to the things that provide them the best possible start in life.

These changes are more urgent than ever as the living cost crisis worsens. The Council should negotiate with IWGB Foster Care Union representatives a fully resourced and timetabled action plan to implement these changes to improve the foster care system for all. North Yorkshire's foster care workers have also created a 'Manifesto for Change' , which also sets out our longer-term aspirations. This is a vision for the future of foster care in North Yorkshire that will ensure young people in care can thrive and foster carers are treated with the respect they deserve.

You can view each petition signer and the comments they left you below. Thank you,

IWGB Foster Care Workers - 133 individual signatories (names and postcodes redacted):

Fair funding for children in foster care

The Fostering Network is calling on governments of the UK to make urgent funding available so that children in foster care and the families that support them do not fall into poverty.

The Fostering Network has undertaken work in this area and has calculated that it costs £215 per week to raise a child in foster care aged 0-4 years, £258 per week to raise a child in foster care aged 5-10 years and £324 per week to raise a child in foster care aged over 11 years.

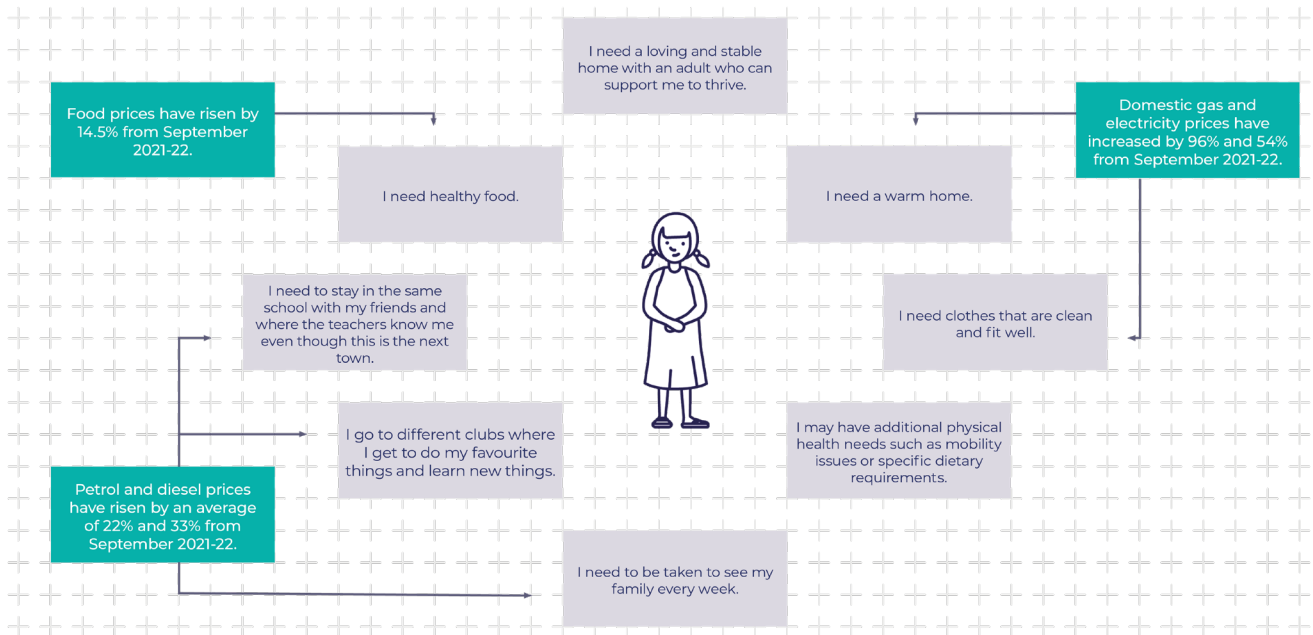
Foster carers provide loving, secure and nurturing family environments where children can thrive. When the decision is made that a child should be in foster care, the state is responsible for meeting that child's health, education, social, emotional and physical needs. This includes covering the costs required for their healthy development.

All UK governments accept this principle yet in practice, children are not getting what they need to live healthy lives.

Foster families are currently receiving much less than they need to support the children in their care. Many dip into their own pockets to cover additional costs.

This was the unacceptable situation children in foster care faced even before the cost of living crisis. Now, as inflation rises and energy, food and fuel prices soar, foster carers may no longer be able to plug the gaps left by the state.

What a child in foster care needs to thrive:



“
Our children deserve better.

Foster carer

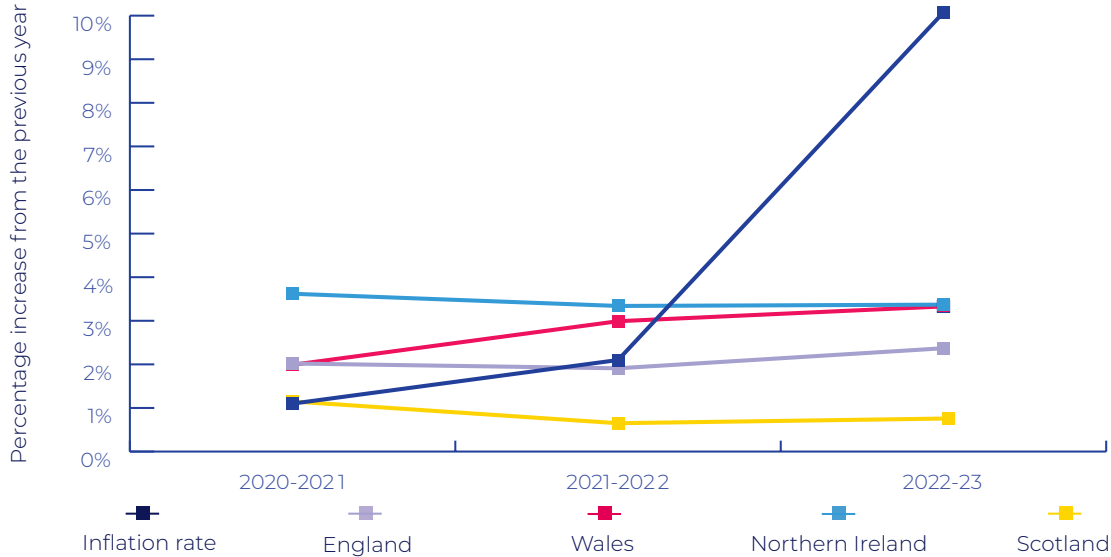
”

“
It's actually costing us to foster. That can't continue.

Foster carer

”

Foster care allowances over the past three years compared to inflation¹



With the cost of living rising, I may have to stop fostering.

Foster carer



England, Northern Ireland and Wales set national allowances intended to cover the costs of looking after a fostered child. These allowances are based on outdated figures and have not kept pace with the increased cost of living.^{2,3}

We are calling on governments across the UK to review the minimum levels of fostering allowances using up to date evidence to ensure that they cover the full costs of looking after a child.

The Scottish Government should introduce and fund a national minimum allowance for foster carers.

Governments across the UK need to make funding available now so our children do not suffer the consequences of the cost of living crisis. It is their responsibility to provide children in care with opportunities to thrive, not just to survive.



Cost of living is so high we are currently using our own money to top up... there is no spare money.

Foster carer



Notes:

1. The line graph is based on the average percentage increase of national minimum fostering allowances in each country. Scotland does not have a national minimum allowance so we have used an average of allowances paid in each local authority.
2. The Department of Education's (England) and The Department of Health's (Northern Ireland) foster care allowances are based on Sue Middleton's Small Fortunes Report, 1997 and Nina Oldfield's, The Adequacy of Foster Care Allowances, 1997.
3. The Welsh Government's recommended minimum allowances are based on the Expenditure and Food Survey 2001/2-2006 and Nina Oldfield's, The Adequacy of Foster Care Allowances, 1997.

The Cost of Fostering – calculations for our proposed new allowance levels

We are proposing a new fairer funding framework for children and young people in foster care. We have reviewed the levels of foster care allowances, using up to date evidence, to ensure our revised proposed allowances cover the full cost of caring for a child. We have been supported by an economist to develop these calculations.

The current national minimum allowances set by governments¹ are not enough and foster families are currently receiving much less than they need to support children in their care, having to dip into their own pockets to cover the costs. The rates are based on out-of-date research, have not been keeping pace with inflation over the years and do not reflect the rising costs of living.

We have calculated that it costs:

- £215 per week to raise a child in foster care aged 0-4 years
- £258 per week to raise a child in foster care aged 5-10 years
- £324 per week to raise a child in foster care aged over 11 years

Our calculations are based on two primary sources of evidence:

- Loughborough University's [Minimum Income Standard \(MIS\) for the United Kingdom 2022 report](#), which produces budgets for different household types, based on what members of the public think you need for a minimum acceptable standard of living in the UK. We have taken from this the basic cost it takes to care for one child.
- Nina Oldfield's ['The Adequacy of Foster Care Allowances'](#) which identifies the additional costs of caring for a child in foster care was between 50-60 per cent more than the cost of caring for a child who was not. Therefore, we have added a 50 per cent multiplier on MIS cost to raise a child.

We have based these on the cost of caring for one child. Although the number of children cared for within a fostering family can differ on a day-to-day basis, the small reductions identified for the second and third child under MIS are not applicable to fostering households due to the differences between fostering families and typical family life.

We have also created a single rate for ages 11 – 17 year old, due to current research supporting a single rate of allowance for this age group. Currently, NMAs suggest an increase to the allowance age 16 and at the age of 18 allowance rates do not apply, instead policy exists to endorse post-18 arrangements. However, there is a lack of financial support and consistency post-18 and it is a barrier preventing more young people being able to benefit from these policies. Therefore, we strongly endorse the single rate of allowance for children aged 11-17 years old and recommend that services uphold this until post-18 arrangements conclude for young people to access stability and support into adulthood.

¹ Scotland is the only country in the UK to not have a national minimum allowance. You can read more about our campaign calling for implementation of a national minimum allowance [here](#).

The aim of this new proposed level of allowances is to allow foster families to receive enough to save for birthdays, holidays, and festival payments, as well as covering additional payments such as mileage, with the intention that foster carers can control and spend these additional funds as they see fit. Therefore, these new proposed levels are designed to cover the full costs of caring for a child in foster care.

We are calling on central governments across the UK to significantly invest in the rates of foster care allowances for children in foster care and increase allowances rates to our proposed levels. Governments should set the allowance levels at a rate that fully cover the cost of caring for a child, using up to date evidence and remain under regular review in line with annual inflation and other relevant factors.

Initial equality impact assessment screening form			
This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.			
Directorate	CYPS		
Service area	C&F, Fostering North Yorkshire Service		
Proposal being screened	Increase to Foster Carer payments		
Officer(s) carrying out screening	Alan Tucker		
What are you proposing to do?	Increase Foster Carer payments, including paying for the first 100 miles (a month) of travel		
Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?	A significant minority of Foster Carers are unhappy about the level of payments and 133 submitted a Petition in December 2022. The desired outcome is to respond to Foster Carer concerns and improve some payments		
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details.	An additional £317K is required. £249K of this will come from the Children and Families Placement Budget, ie. an existing Budget		
Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYCC's additional agreed characteristics			
As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics? Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important? Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to? 			
If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be an adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your Equality rep for advice if you are in any doubt.			
Protected characteristic	Potential for adverse impact		Don't know/No info available
	Yes	No	
Age		X	
Disability		X	
Sex		X	
Race		X	
Sexual orientation		X	
Gender reassignment		X	
Religion or belief		X	
Pregnancy or maternity		X	
Marriage or civil partnership		X	
People in rural areas		X	
People on a low income		X	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		X	
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts (e.g. disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details.	No		
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (e.g. partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.	No		

Decision (Please tick one option)	EIA not relevant or proportionate:	✓	Continue to full EIA:	
Reason for decision	There will be no impact upon any of the Protected Characteristics			
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)				
Date	21 March 2023			

Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment (Form created August 2021)

The intention of this document is to help the council to gain an initial understanding of the impact of a project or decision on the environment. This document should be completed in consultation with the supporting guidance. Dependent on this initial assessment you may need to go on to complete a full Climate Change Impact Assessment. The final document will be published as part of the decision-making process.

If you have any additional queries, which are not covered by the guidance please email climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk

Title of proposal	Increase to Foster Carer payments
Brief description of proposal	A significant minority of Foster Carers are unhappy about the level of payments and 133 submitted a Petition in December 2022. The desired outcome is to respond to Foster Carer concerns and improve some payments. So there will be an increase in Foster Carer payments including paying for the first 100 miles (a month) of travel
Directorate	CYPS
Service area	C&F, Fostering North Yorkshire Service
Lead officer	Alan Tucker
Names and roles of other people involved in carrying out the impact assessment	Mel Hutchinson Judith Russ

The chart below contains the main environmental factors to consider in your initial assessment – choose the appropriate option from the drop-down list for each one.

Remember to think about the following;

- Travel
- Construction
- Data storage
- Use of buildings
- Change of land use
- Opportunities for recycling and reuse

Environmental factor to consider	For the county council	For the county	Overall
Greenhouse gas emissions	No effect on emissions	No Effect on emissions	No effect on emissions
Waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste
Water use	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage
Pollution (air, land, water, noise, light)	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution
Resilience to adverse weather/climate events (flooding, drought etc)	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience
Ecological effects (biodiversity, loss of habitat etc)	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology
Heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape

If any of these factors are likely to result in a negative or positive environmental impact then a full climate change impact assessment will be required. It is important that we capture information about both positive and negative impacts to aid the council in calculating its carbon footprint and environmental impact.

Decision (Please tick one option)	Full CCIA not relevant or proportionate:	✓	Continue to full CCIA:	
Reason for decision	<p>There will be no effect on any of the environmental factors that need to be considered.</p> <p>The specific change to pay for the first 100 miles (a month) of Foster Carers travel will not increase or decrease any travel – the journeys are already being made etc.</p>			
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)				
Date	21 March 2023			