

22 September 2022

Foster Care Fee Payments

This request focuses on foster carer fee payments (excluding foster care allowances) and the annual (or exceptional) fee rises that they have experienced in the last decade. I would like you to provide the details of the annual percentage fee rise for each foster carer grade (delineation or type of fee-paying placement) in your organisation between 2011-12 to 2021-22.

1. Please can you provide the date (month/ year) when the last review of foster carer fee rates took place.

Within the Belfast Trust, there is a range of Standard Foster carer fees which can be agreed in addition to Foster care allowances. This equates to a full fee, or a half fee or a quarter fee - dependant on the assessed circumstances

Trust Fees - £12958 (or Half or quarter fee thereof).

This fee arrangement has been in place since 2008 and therefore the last review predates the timescale requested.

There has been no review of Foster carer fee rates within the provided 10 year reference period,

The Foster Care Allowances are uplifted on a yearly basis by SPPG and are uniform across the 5 locality Trust areas.

In the Belfast Trust there is a range of new initiatives that have been developed for specialist schemes that sit outside the standard fee arrangements. These Specialist initiatives are for children for whom there are 'difficult to find carers' due to complexities

- **Intensive Adolescent Program fees - £14669** – introduced prior to the time scale identified and there has been no uplift within the reference period
- **Intensive scheme Fees - £21,000** introduced in 2018 there has been no uplift within the reference period
- **Disability Scheme Fees - £17,000** introduced in 2015 there has been no uplift within the reference period

2. Please can you provide the date (month/ year) when the last increase of foster carer fee rates took place.

There has been no increase in the fee scale within the requested timescale of 2010/11 – 2021/22

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3. Please can you provide the average increase that was applied when the last increase of foster carer fee rates took place.

There has been no increase in foster carer fee rates within this timescale of 2010/11 – 2021/22

4. Please can you outline the details of the fee increase (please provide a format like the table below) for each and all foster carer grades (fee variations) within your trust, providing details of the grade (annual fee), the percentage rise, and the date on which the fee increase was applied. If no annual fee increase was applied in a given year, please state this within the table.

Foster Carer Grade/ Foster Carer Annual Fee Grade/ Percentage Rise/ Date on which fee rise was applied/ Date increase was back date to if applicable

e.g. 2011-12 /6.5K 1% rise /Applied June 2021/ Back dated to April 2021

There has been no increase in foster carer fee rates within this timescale of 2010/11 – 2021/22

5. In accordance with UK Minimum Standard “22.3 The authority manages access by carers to reward payments through a clear well publicised system”. Please can you detail your publication of your reward payments (fee payments) system (e.g., web link, recent public communication, recent communication with all foster carers)

Foster carers are advised at recruitment and assessment stage of their fostering career regarding the different types of fostering schemes and the range of fee paid arrangements linked to the needs of particular children and young people.

That there is financial assistance is referenced/ publicised on the Northern Ireland HSC adoption and foster care website alongside other supports available to Carers.

6. In accordance with UK Minimum Standard “22.4. Each carer receives clear information on any available reward payment scheme requirements of carers for development of skills and how to access increased payments.” Please can you provide a copy of the most recent communication your organisation sent to all foster carers advising them of your reward payment (fee payments) scheme.

There is no established formalised information or communication system in place in Belfast Trust at present. Prospective carers are verbally advised of the existence of fees and specialist schemes should they be interested at the point of their assessment or in response to queries at the point of enquiry to foster.