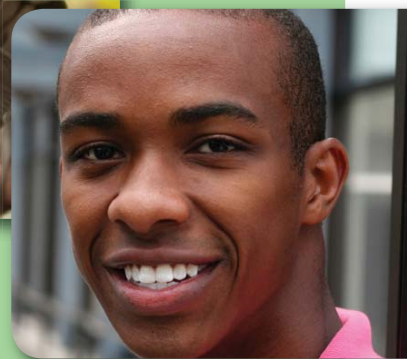


# Update to The Cost of Foster Care

Lisa Holmes and Jean Soper  
Centre for Child and Family Research,  
Loughborough University  
2010



## **Update to The Cost of Foster Care**

*The Cost of Foster Care: investing in our children's future*, by Robert Tapsfield and Felicity Collier, was published jointly by the Fostering Network and the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) in 2005.

The report drew on the experiences of an expert reference group and, for the first time, identified and then costed all the elements required to transform foster care in order to give children in public care the same opportunities and life chances as other children.

*Update to The Cost of Foster Care*, by Lisa Holmes and Jean Soper of the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University, is published by the Fostering Network. It updates the original report and provides a new estimate for the level of funding required to provide a properly resourced foster carer service.

A full description of all the elements that are required to provide a foster care service are contained within the original report, which is available at [www.fostering.net/resources/reports/cost-foster-care](http://www.fostering.net/resources/reports/cost-foster-care)

**Robert Tapsfield**  
Chief Executive  
The Fostering Network

# Update to The Cost of Foster Care

Lisa Holmes and Jean Soper

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The aim of this work is to produce a supplement to *The Cost of Foster Care* (Tapsfield and Collier, 2005), updating the estimates it presents of the investment needed to provide a properly resourced foster care service throughout the United Kingdom. Calculations of costs and investment needed have been revised to take account of new data and changes in monetary values.
- 1.1.2 This report discusses changes in government policy, practice and recent research evidence that impact on the computations. Except where such changes are noted, the policy and evidence set out in the original report are still valid.

### 1.2 Changes since 2004 in numbers of children in foster care, expenditure and outcomes

- 1.2.1 Over the four years from 2004 to 2008 the number of children in foster care across the UK grew slowly but steadily from 49,265 to 51,408, which represents an average annual rate of increase of 1.1 per cent. The total number of looked after children grew rather more slowly at about half that rate while the number placed with their parents remained steady at about 12,000. The proportion of children looked after away from home who were in foster care therefore rose very slightly from 73 per cent in 2004 to 74 per cent in 2008. These trends then changed. In the year to 2009 the total number of looked after children rose by 2.5 per cent and the proportion who were placed with their parents fell by 8.5 per cent so that 4.4 per cent more children were looked after away from home. The annual rate of increase in the number of children in foster care jumped to 5.2 per cent in 2009. These statistics are compiled

from government data for the four countries of the UK<sup>1</sup> (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009a; Scottish Government, 2008 and 2010; Local Government Data Unit, Wales, 2010; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2009 and Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2010).

1.2.2 Accurate information on the number of foster carers in each country is less readily available, but estimates compiled by the Fostering Network (2010) and, for England, by Ofsted (2010) suggest that in the UK as a whole the number of foster carers has increased since 2004 by 12.6 per cent. This overall figure masks the considerable variation between the four countries. The growth in the number of carers was only 7.2 per cent in England but much greater in each of the other three countries, reaching a 60 per cent rise in Wales. In all four countries the number of foster carers has increased more rapidly than the number of children fostered over the last five years, reducing the ratio of fostered children to carers in the UK as a whole from 1.16 to 1.13 children per carer.

1.2.3 Figure 1 is developed from a similar chart for Scotland produced by the Reference group on 'Getting it right for every child in kinship and foster care' (2009). Figure 1 relates to the United Kingdom and plots the number of children in foster care at the end of each financial year up to 2008/09 on the right hand axis of the graph. This series is the upper one on the chart with points marked by diamonds. The line connecting the points shows a slight but steady rise each year up to 2007/08 but then bends upwards with the greater increase in the number of children in foster care up to March 2009. The lower series on the chart, marked with squares, represents real expenditure on fostering services in each financial year. The values, which are adjusted to take account of inflation and measured in 2008/09 prices, are plotted on the left hand axis for the years for which they are available. This series rises each year up to 2007/08 and shows an average annual increase in real expenditure on fostering services of 6.8 per cent. The expenditure data<sup>2</sup> are taken from Information

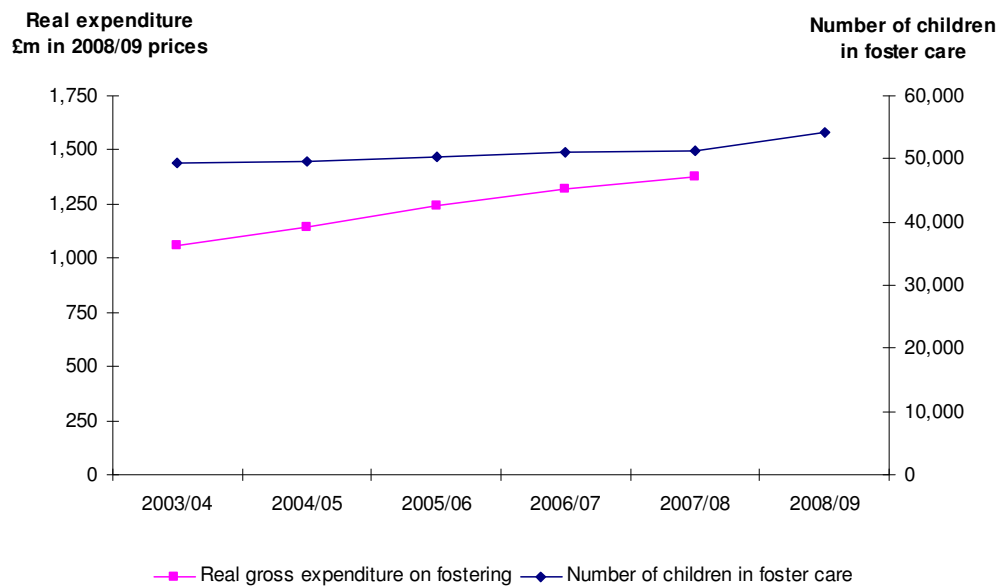
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<sup>1</sup> Data on the number of looked after children in Northern Ireland in 2009 were not yet available when this report was written. It has been assumed that the rates of change that occurred in Northern Ireland between 2008 and 2009 were the same as those that occurred in Great Britain.

<sup>2</sup> Expenditure data for Northern Ireland was not available after 2003/04. It has been assumed that expenditure in Northern Ireland over the period grew at the same rate as in Great Britain.

Centre for Health and Social Care (2009), Scottish Government (2009)<sup>3</sup> and Welsh Assembly Government (2009). Expenditure figures for 2008/09 were not yet available when this report was written.

**Figure 1 Real expenditure £m in 2008/09 prices in each financial year and number of children in foster care on 31 March of each year in UK**



1.2.4 Since real expenditure on fostering services rose much faster than the number of children in foster care between 2003/04 and 2007/08, the two series appear much closer together at the end of that time period than at the beginning. This implies that there was a sizeable increase in real expenditure per child between 2003/04 and 2007/08. English data show that expenditure on fostering services is greater than that on children’s homes, and that the total expenditure on placements for looked after children accounts for 39 per cent of children’s social services expenditure.

1.2.5 The increase in expenditure on foster care is likely to be the result of a number of factors. There is anecdotal evidence that the level of support available to foster carers and children in foster care has increased. More importance is now given to providing computers, access to leisure activities, one to one tuition, and extra curricular activities for example. In England, the requirement for foster carers to demonstrate that they meet the CWDC Training Support and Development Standards

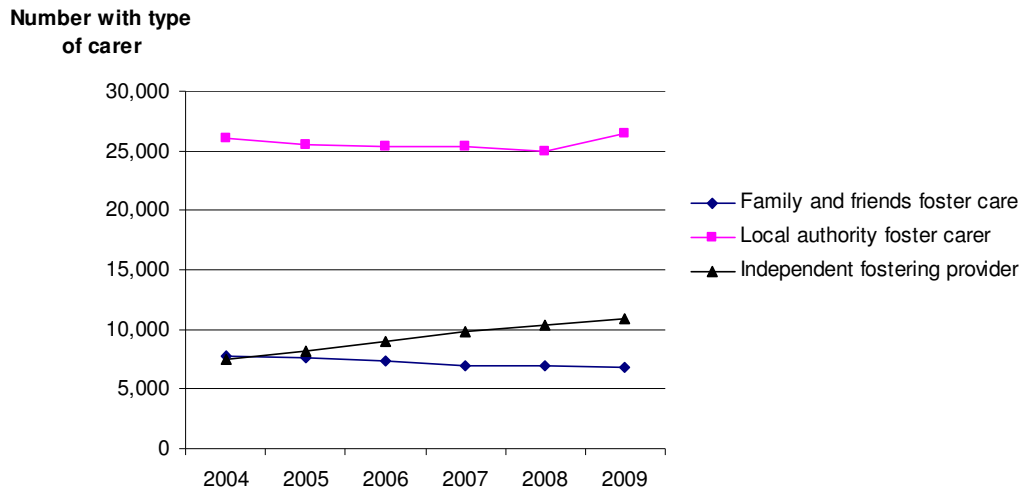
<sup>3</sup> Further details of Scottish expenditure were supplied on request.

has led to more provision of training for foster carers. A survey by Tearse (2010) into the pay foster carers received in 2009 shows that while the overall proportion of foster carers who receive a fee may not have increased since 2006, the levels of payment for those who are paid, although still generally very low, have increased significantly. During the time period there has been a steady increase in the proportion and total number of children in foster care placed by an independent fostering provider. There is also greater use of specialist foster schemes under which foster carers are paid higher fees for their additional skills. While there is no firm evidence that the number of such schemes has increased over the period, one ongoing example is Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC). The Government (Department for Children, Schools and Families) has been funding a pilot programme of MTFC in England, but the number of placements is still small with a total of 150 placements between 2004 and 2008 (National Implementation Team, 2009).

1.2.6 The availability of such schemes may ensure that the additional needs of children (such as disabilities, emotional or behavioural difficulties and offending behaviour) are better addressed. Care provision for children with such needs has been shown to cost more than that for children who display none of these characteristics (Ward, Holmes and Soper, 2008) and the cost of MTFC has been found to be comparable with that of other placement types for children with similar needs (Holmes, Westlake and Ward, 2009). This study also highlighted an issue of exit planning, since children were expected to move on from MTFC but there was a shortage of carers to whom they could move. Staying on in MTFC may provide stability, but the issue of 'bed blocking' arises, preventing other children from moving into MTFC.

1.2.7 Foster care placements may be provided either by local authorities or by independent fostering providers (IFPs). Data for England, displayed in Figure 2, show that there has been a steady increase in both the number and proportion of children placed with independent fostering providers since 2004 while at the same time the number of children with family and friends foster carers has decreased. Interestingly, the sudden increase in the number of children coming in to foster care in 2009 has been to a considerable extent accommodated by local authority foster carers.

**Figure 2 Numbers of children with different types of foster care providers on 31 March of each year in England**



1.2.8 The Fostering Network (2006) suggested that the observed increase in usage of IFP placements showed that the independent sector were not finding it as difficult to recruit foster carers as local authorities. An explanation for this could be that the reward packages and ongoing support to carers offered by many local authority fostering services are still less comprehensive than those offered by IFPs which operate lower caseloads for supervising social workers (also known as family placement workers or link workers) (Commission for Social Care Inspection, 2005). A study by Kirton, Beecham and Ogilvie (2003) reported by Beecham and Sinclair (2007) found that there was considerable variation in the level of support provided to foster carers and that those working for independent providers generally received more support and reported greater satisfaction with the support provided. Satisfied carers were also more likely to undertake training and participate in groups and social events. Kirton et al also found a difference in the case loads between local authorities and IFPs, with mean case loads ranging between 7 and 22 foster carers within the participating authorities, whilst the corresponding range for the IFPs was 4-11.

1.2.9 The case for additional investment presented by Tapsfield and Collier (2005) was supported by evidence of very poor outcomes achieved by children who are looked after by local authorities. Further research has shown that mental health problems are experienced by 45 per cent of looked after children aged 5-17 years, which is a much higher prevalence rate than occurs in the general child population (McAuley

and Davis, 2009). The most recent outcomes data for England (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009b) include data about those who were cautioned or convicted for an offence during the year to September 2008. Of children in care who are aged 10 or over, the percentage in this group is 9 per cent. This is a lower rate than in the years from 2004 to 2007, but it is still double the rate for all children of this age. Similarly, there is evidence of a slight improvement in the educational achievements of looked after children, but they are still far lower than for children as a whole. For example, for children in school year 11, the percentage of those in public care who obtained at least one GCSE or GNVQ was 66 per cent in 2008. This rate has increased a little each year since 2005 when it was 60 per cent. However, it is still well below the overall rate for all children, which was 99 per cent in 2008.

- 1.2.10 There has been a focus by all the UK Governments on improving outcomes for children in care. In England the Care Matters implementation plan, *Care Matters: Time to deliver for children in care* (Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Local Government Association (LGA) and others, 2008) set out the shared vision about what all stakeholders want to achieve for children in care and how this is to be supported by performance management and legislation. The plan encourages local partners to plan for service improvement and explains how progress will be collectively monitored and evaluated to ensure the momentum that has developed since 2006 is maintained.
- 1.2.11 The first Ministerial Stocktake report was published in November 2009 (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009c). This reports on the progress of implementing Care Matters, giving examples of additional measures that have been taken to improve outcomes such as:
- the introduction of a Personal Educational Allowance that can be used to provide personalised support for children in care who do not reach the expected educational standard;
  - provision of support to Government Office Networks to develop and spread best practice about how to improve outcomes for children in their care; and
  - introduction of a requirement for local authorities to pay a £2000 bursary to all care leavers who undertake a designated higher education course.



The report also sets out the Government's plans for 2010. These include reviewing the National Minimum Standards and consulting on and issuing revised care planning guidance, revised regulations and guidance for fostering services, new guidance for independent reviewing officers and guidance on the sufficiency duty.

- 1.2.12 The strategy for improving outcomes in Northern Ireland was set out by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2007) in *Care Matters in Northern Ireland, A Bridge to a Better Future*. Following consultation the strategy was endorsed by the executive in September 2009, but work to implement the strategy has been underway since 2007.
- 1.2.13 The Welsh Government have been similarly concerned about poor outcomes for children in care. They have funded initiatives to improve the commissioning of foster care from the independent sector and have been consulting with stakeholders on a how to improve stability and outcomes for children in care.
- 1.2.14 The Scottish Government's strategy for improving outcomes for children in foster care is set out in the report prepared by Donnelley (2007) *Getting it Right for Every Child in Kinship and Foster Care*. This national strategy built on reforms contained in the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 and has been further developed in *These are our Bairns, a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent* (Donnelley, 2008) and the report of the Reference group established to take forward the national strategy (2009), *Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care* published by the Scottish Government.

## **2 Methodology**

- 2.1 The aim of this work is to estimate separately for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the cost of a properly resourced foster care service in 2008/09, and by comparing these amounts with the latest expenditure figures available, which are for 2007/08, to estimate the additional funding required to provide such a service. A further objective is to predict the expenditure that will be required in each of the following four financial years up till 2012/13.
  
- 2.2 The calculations and the tables in which they are set out follow the pattern of those in the original report and the assumptions that were used are generally retained. Wherever possible, up to date data replace the values originally used in the calculations. If more recent information is not available, for example when the costs in the original report were based on information provided by the working group, monetary values have been inflated using values from the GDP Deflator series (HM Treasury, 2009). In tables in the text, monetary values are shown in millions of pounds, rounded to one decimal place. Because of this rounding the total shown may not quite equal the sum of the individual values. Detailed figures in pounds are shown in Appendix 2.

### 3 Current expenditure on foster care

- 3.1 Table 1 shows the total annual expenditure on foster care services in 2007/08 using government data. The foster care expenditure figure is not available for Northern Ireland and has been estimated by applying the expenditure growth rate that occurred in Great Britain (taking England, Scotland and Wales together) between 2003/04 and 2007/08 to the Northern Ireland expenditure figure for 2003/04.

*Table 1 Total annual expenditure on foster care*

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>N. Ireland</b>	<b>UK total</b>
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
2007/08	1,125.2	104.4	88.5	30.3	1,348.4

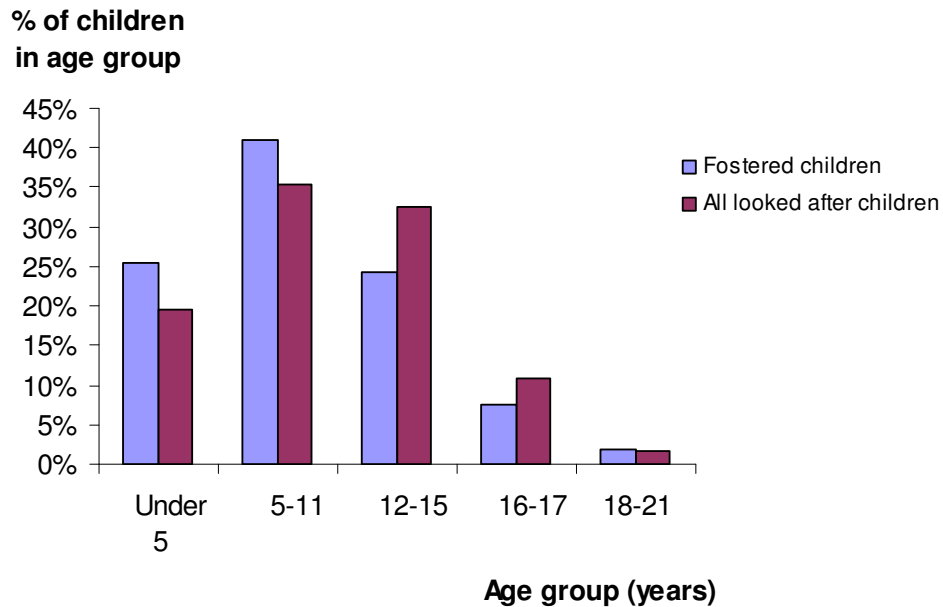
- 3.2 In addition to presenting government expenditure data, Tapsfield and Collier (2005) included expenditure data from CIPFA, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, since the 2003-04 values appeared to differ from the government ones by up to 19 per cent. CIPFA, however, have since revised their 2003-04 data and the values they now give for that year are no more than 1 per cent different from the government ones. We have chosen, therefore, to present only the government data.

## **4 Expenditure required on foster care services**

### **4.1 Allowances**

- 4.1.1 The cost of paying allowances to foster carers in 2008/9 is calculated using the number of children in foster placements on 31 March 2008. As in the original report, we assume that all foster carers receive the Fostering Network's recommended minimum allowance, including four weeks additional allowances for birthday and holidays.
- 4.1.2 The recommended allowances, which are shown in Appendix 1, are set at different rates for children in different age groups and also according to whether or not the foster placement is located in London. However, published government figures only provide an overall age breakdown for all looked after children (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009a; Local Government Data Unit, Wales, 2010 and Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2008). The exception is Scotland which does provide an age breakdown for the number of children in foster care, although the age groups used are defined slightly differently (Scottish Government, 2008).
- 4.1.3 The Scottish data confirm that foster care is used relatively more for younger children, while residential and independent placements are more common amongst older children. Figure 3 shows the percentage of Scottish children in foster care who are in each of the age groups, together with the percentage of all looked after children in Scotland who are in that age group. Taken together, the two younger age groups which comprise children up to 11 years old include 66 per cent of fostered children but only 55 per cent of looked after children as a whole.

**Figure 3 Age group distribution of fostered children and all looked after children, Scotland, 2008**



4.1.4 To estimate the cost of paying fostering allowances, for Scotland we have used the actual age distribution of the children, adjusted to fit the age groups for which the allowances are recommended. The age group distribution of fostered children in the other three countries will not be exactly the same as in Scotland where children placed with relatives are not considered to be in foster care. If, however, we were to assume that the age distribution of fostered children is the same as that for all looked after children we would overestimate the number of older children and thus obtain an over-estimate of the cost of paying fostering allowances, since higher allowances are recommended for older age groups. For England, Wales and Northern Ireland, therefore, we have chosen to calculate the number of foster children there would be in each age group if we apply the Scottish proportions and also if we apply the age distribution of all looked after children in the particular country. We have then used the average of the figures generated by these two different methods. In England it is additionally assumed that the proportion of children in London placements is the same for children in foster care as for all children who are looked after.

4.1.5 The total cost of paying the Fostering Network’s recommended minimum allowance to foster carers is set out in Table 2. The calculations multiply the allowance levels recommended for 2008/09 by the total number of fostered children in the corresponding age group and also by the number of weeks the children spent in foster care, which has to be estimated. The overall total number of foster placement weeks during the year is available for England (see Table 2) but not for the other three countries. The next row in the table shows the number of children in foster care in each country on 31 March 2008. Since these values are for a specific date they are not necessarily typical of the number of children in foster care on other dates throughout the year. As the total number of foster placement weeks is the product of the average number of fostered children and the average number of weeks spent in foster care, dividing the English figure by the number of children in foster care in England on 31 March gives an estimate of the average number of weeks in care per child. The resulting value is 52.36 weeks, which is implausibly high and implies that the number of children in foster care in England must on average have been higher on other dates in 2007/08 than on 31 March. Nevertheless, the estimate of 52.36 weeks is the best available and it has been used to calculate the cost of paying allowances in all four countries. These are shown in the last row of Table 2, with detailed figures in column 18 of Appendix 3.

*Table 2* **Total annual cost of paying the Fostering Network allowances**

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>N. Ireland</b>	<b>UK total</b>
Placement weeks in foster care 07/08	2,199,000	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
No. of children looked after on 31.03.08 in foster care	42,000	4,243	3,485	1,680	51,408
<b>Allowances, £m</b>	<b>382.1</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>463.4</b>

4.1.6 Of the costs shown in Table 2, that for England is likely to be the most accurate estimate since the total number of placement weeks is known. The costs shown for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland may be overestimates. If the numbers of children in foster care on 31 March are typical of the year as a whole these need to be multiplied by a lower number of weeks than 52.36. The English data also include a figure for the numbers of weeks of care provided for all looked after children, which is 37.86 weeks. Since children generally spend shorter times in residential placements, using this value would be likely to underestimate the total number of foster placement weeks. An alternative, however, for the three countries where the

number of placement weeks is not known is to use the average of the two English figures for the number of weeks, namely 45.11 weeks. This figure has been used to produce the alternative estimates of the costs of paying allowances shown in Table 2b. The UK total is reduced by £10.8 million (2 per cent) when the lower estimate of the number of weeks is used.

**Table 2b Total annual cost of paying the Fostering Network allowances if average time in care is 45.11 weeks**

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>N. Ireland</b>	<b>UK total</b>
Placement weeks in foster care 07/08	2,199,000	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
No. of children looked after on 31.03.08 in foster care	42,000	4,243	3,485	1,680	51,408
Allowances, £m	382.1	31.4	26.3	12.9	452.6

4.1.7 National minimum allowances for foster carers have been set for carers in England and are shown in Appendix 2. The same figures are in use in Northern Ireland, while Wales and Scotland have yet to decide on these. The national minimum allowances are set separately for three regions: London, the South East and elsewhere (Base), and they define separate rates for children under 1 year and those aged between 1 and 4 years. Table 2c uses 52.36 placement weeks, as does Table 2 and shows the total annual cost of paying the national minimum allowances that have been established in England throughout the United Kingdom. The national minimum allowances are somewhat below the Fostering Network’s recommended minimum allowances, so that the UK total for allowances is reduced by £125 million (27 per cent) if only the national minimum allowances are paid.

*Table 2c* **Total annual cost of paying the National Minimum allowances**

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>N. Ireland</b>	<b>UK total</b>
Placement weeks in foster care 07/08	2,199,000	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
No. of children looked after on 31.03.08 in foster care	42,000	4,243	3,485	1,680	51,408
Allowances, £m	278.5	26.9	22.4	10.9	338.7

## **4.2 Payments/Fees**

- 4.2.1 Some of the key points relating to foster carer payments have been highlighted by Beecham and Sinclair (2007), drawing on the aforementioned study by Kirton, Beecham and Ogilvie (2003). They note that very few carers were ‘in it for the money’ but that nevertheless they often relied on the income and 61 per cent of carers thought that fostering should be salaried. A survey into the pay foster carers receive undertaken in 2009 by Tearse (2010) notes that the level of fees received by foster carers is something of a lottery since there are no national fee scales. The report estimates that between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of foster carers receive no fee payments and almost three quarters of them do not get paid 52 weeks a year. It observes, however, that the situation is gradually improving with higher fee levels for more of those who are paid.
- 4.2.2 Our calculations utilise the four different skill levels of fee payments identified in the original report. The payments for the different skills levels have been inflated in accordance with the rise in the GDP deflator and are shown in Figure 4, together with the proportions of children for which they are assumed to be paid. The original report assumes that some family and friends foster carers will receive a fee if they meet the eligibility criteria for fee paying schemes, and that only a very small number of other foster carers will receive no fee. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, therefore, where approximately 17 per cent of fostered children are placed with friends and family carers, it is assumed that no fees are paid in 15 per cent of placements. All children fostered in Scotland are assumed to receive a fee element, since those in friends and family care are not considered to be fostered.



*Figure 4* Amount of payment at each fee level and percentage of placements

	Fee		per cent placements at stated fee level	
	per week	per year	England, Wales, N. Ireland	Scotland
Level 1	0	0	15 per cent	
Level 2	£132	£6,864	20 per cent	24 per cent
Level 3	£204	£10,608	22 per cent	26 per cent
Level 4	£303	£15,756	35 per cent	42 per cent
Level 5	£424	£22,048	8 per cent	8 per cent

4.2.3 To calculate an overall total for expenditure on fees that will allow fostering services to determine their own payment structure, the fee element is assumed to be linked to the number of children in the placement and the number of weeks for which they are fostered. This implies that the cost of fee payments, like the cost of allowances, depends on the number of children in foster care and the number of weeks for which they are fostered, rather than on the number of foster carers.

## 4.3 Vacancy level

4.3.1 As in the original report, we assume a vacancy level of 15 per cent to provide some choice of placement so that children's needs can be met. Table 3 shows the cost of paying fees to foster carers for the children placed with them plus an additional 15 per cent. Detailed figures for fee payments are in column 20 of Appendix 3.

*Table 3* Total cost of paying fees to foster carers

	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland	UK total
Placement weeks in foster care 07/08	2,199,000	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
No. of children looked after on 31.03.08 in foster care	42,000	4,243	3,485	1,680	51,408
Fees (£m)	464.5	54.6	38.5	18.6	576.3
15 per cent vacancy level (£m)	69.7	8.2	5.8	2.8	86.4
<b>Total required for fees (£m)</b>	<b>534.2</b>	<b>62.8</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>662.7</b>

## 4.4 Post-approval training and qualification

- 4.4.1 The numbers of core training sessions per carer and per carer partner are assumed to be the same as in the original report. However, that report made the assumption that 20 per cent of carers were single, but a recent database check has revealed that 30 per cent are single. This figure is used in the new calculations, reducing the number of partners attending training sessions.
- 4.4.2 The original report calculated NVQ training costs on the assumption that all new foster carers would study for a S/NVQ level 3 qualification and 50 per cent of them would achieve it each year. This assumption is continued in the updated calculations. The earlier report further assumed that some existing mainstream foster carers would study for such a qualification, with 10 per cent of them completing it each year. A recent survey of foster carers by Tearse (2010) found that 34 per cent of respondents already held a NVQ relevant to fostering, and a further 18 per cent were currently working towards one. As more carers complete a NVQ, less will be studying for one each year. Also, some of the survey respondents may have been new foster carers. This report therefore makes a lower assumption, namely that 7 per cent of existing foster carers complete a NVQ each year.
- 4.4.3 The numbers of foster care households in each country, obtained from the Fostering Network website, <http://www.fostering.net/about-fostering/statistics-looked-after-children> are shown in Table 4.

*Table 4* **Number of foster care households in the UK, 2009**

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>N. Ireland</b>	<b>UK</b>
Number of foster care households	39,679	3,328	3,046	1,800	47,853

- 4.4.4 The estimated full cost of foster carer post-approval training (UK) is set out in Figure 5, with the national totals shown also in column 17 of Appendix 3. The calculations are based on the assumptions about the amounts of training stated above, for the numbers of households shown in Table 4 and assuming that the costs of a training

session and of obtaining a S/NVQ qualification have increased in line with the change in the GDP deflator.

*Figure 5* Total cost of training carers and their families

**1. Basic core training 5 sessions per year at £44.06 per session**

	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland
Family and friends foster carers	6745	Not applicable	518	306
Partners of family and friends foster carers	4722	Not applicable	363	214
Partners of foster carers	23054	2330	1770	1046
Total persons	34521	2330	2651	1566
<b>Cost</b>	<b>£7,604,976</b>	<b>£513,299</b>	<b>£584,015</b>	<b>£344,990</b>

**2. Core training 10 sessions per year at £44.06 per session**

	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland
Main foster carers	32,934	3,328	2,528	1,494
<b>Cost</b>	<b>£14,510,720</b>	<b>£1,466,317</b>	<b>£1,113,837</b>	<b>£658,256</b>

**3. NVQ training or equivalent**

	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland
Retained main foster carers	2,075	210	159	94
<b>Cost</b>	<b>£4,000,600</b>	<b>£404,880</b>	<b>£306,552</b>	<b>£181,232</b>

Turnover at 10 per cent per annum

Annual cost of equipping half the new foster carers to S/NVQ

	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland
New foster carers	1,647	166	126	75
<b>Cost</b>	<b>£3,174,838</b>	<b>£320,819</b>	<b>£243,699</b>	<b>£144,022</b>

**4. Total cost of training**

	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland	UK total
Basic core training	£7,604,976	£513,299	£584,015	£344,990	£9,047,280
Core training	£14,510,720	£1,466,317	£1,113,837	£658,256	£17,749,130
NVQ training	£7,175,438	£725,699	£550,251	£325,254	£8,776,642
<b>Total</b>	<b>£29,291,135</b>	<b>£2,705,315</b>	<b>£2,248,103</b>	<b>£1,328,500</b>	<b>£35,573,053</b>

## 4.5 Respite Provision

4.5.1 In the original report respite provision was costed at two additional weeks a year of payments and allowances for each child fostered. However, a recent survey of carers published by the Fostering Network (Clarke, 2009) found that 65 per cent of foster carers said that having access to respite was important to them and therefore in this report respite provision is costed on the basis that it will be required for 65 per cent of children. The cost of providing this level of respite is shown in Table 5, with the detailed figures in columns 19 and 21 of Appendix 3.

*Table 5 Total annual cost of respite provision*

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>N. Ireland</b>	<b>UK total</b>
Placement weeks in foster care 07/08	2,199,000	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
No. of children looked after on 31.03.08 in foster care	42,000	4,243	3,485	1,680	51,408
Respite allowances (£m)	8.8	0.8	0.7	0.3	10.7
Respite fees/payments (£m)	11.5	1.4	1.0	0.5	14.3
<b>Total (£m)</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>25.0</b>

## 4.6 Support, equipment, management and panel costs

4.6.1 As in the original report, with the exception of respite provision we have calculated all management and support costs per foster carer. Noting that local authorities considered that their services were very under-managed in 2004, we assume the same supervision ratios as the original report. Personnel costs for 2006/07 are given in Curtis (2007), the last volume of this annual publication that included children's social care. These have been inflated to 2008/09 levels in accordance with the GDP deflator series. These figures include a 15 per cent allowance for administrative overheads plus a lump sum amount for buildings, (total of 22 per cent) based on estimates by Knapp et al (1984).

4.6.2 Research has recently been completed by the research team at CCFR in partnership with the University of Bristol to explore overhead costs (Selwyn et al, 2009). This work was undertaken as part of a study to explore overhead costs in relation to

adoption services. Seven local authorities provided a breakdown of their finance and expenditure data which has been used to develop a coding framework that is now being trialled and verified in a number of other research studies being undertaken by CCFR. The findings from this work suggest that overheads should be calculated at between 40 per cent and 60 per cent as opposed to the values actually used which are described above. In a recently published study to explore the costs of short break provision (Holmes, McDermid and Sempik, 2010), the average overhead across three authorities was 36.6 per cent, using the overhead framework. If the true costs of foster care provision including overheads were known, local authority expenditure would be shown to be even greater than it appears, and thus the 22 per cent is likely to be an underestimate. However, top-level management and capital overheads are likely to be funded from a separate budget.

- 4.6.3 Support, equipment, administration and panel hearings are assumed to be provided on the same basis as in the original report. The cost of each support group or event and of the provision of equipment etc has been inflated using the GDP deflator series. The costs are calculated in Appendix 3 in columns 3 to 16 and the sum of the values in these fourteen columns gives the figures shown in the row labelled Management and support in Table 6. The Training costs shown in Table 6 are a summary of those calculated in Figure 5 above and are also shown in column 17 of Appendix 3.

*Table 6 Management, support and training costs*

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>N. Ireland</b>	<b>UK total</b>
Number of foster carer households	39,679	3,328	3,046	1,800	47,853
Management and support (£m)	617.3	51.8	47.4	25.7	742.2
Training (£m)	29.3	2.7	2.2	1.3	35.6
<b>Total (£m)</b>	<b>646.6</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>777.8</b>

## 4.7 Total expenditure required for a properly resourced foster care service

4.7.1 Table 7 summarises under various headings the cost of a properly resourced foster care service for each country. The costs of allowances, payments and respite care are calculated using the total number of children in foster care on 31 March 2008 and the average number of weeks for which each child is fostered (see Table 2 and its description). It was noted there that the estimate of 52.36 weeks stay in foster care does not accurately represent the typical number of weeks per year, but it is the best estimate available and is used for all four countries. The costs of training, management and support are found using the number of foster carers estimated by the Fostering Network and shown in Table 4.

*Table 7* Total expenditure required on foster care services

	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland	UK total
Allowances (£m)	382.1	36.2	30.3	14.8	463.4
Payments (£m)	534.2	62.8	44.3	21.4	662.7
Training (£m)	29.3	2.7	2.2	1.3	35.6
Respite care (£m)	20.3	2.2	1.7	0.8	25.0
Management and support (£m)	617.3	51.8	47.4	25.7	742.2
<b>Total (£m)</b>	<b>1583.2</b>	<b>155.6</b>	<b>126.0</b>	<b>64.1</b>	<b>1928.9</b>
Average weekly unit cost of allowances, payments and respite care	425.93	455.39	418.30	420.87	425.18
Average weekly unit cost of training, management and support	294.04	245.24	272.03	307.55	288.96
Overall average weekly unit cost	719.97	700.63	690.33	728.42	716.64

4.7.2 The average weekly unit costs are worked out by dividing total costs in each country by the number of children fostered there on 31 March 2008 and by the average number of weeks for which each child is fostered. Table 7 shows average weekly unit costs separately for allowances, payments and respite care and for training, management and support as well as the overall average for each country.

4.7.3 The differences between the countries in required average weekly unit costs are relatively small. Variations in the average cost of allowances, payments and respite care are due to differences in the age distributions of the fostered children and, in the case of Scotland, to there being no friends and family foster carers. These unit costs are unaffected by any possible inaccuracy in the average number of weeks in foster care<sup>4</sup>. There is slightly more difference between the countries in the average cost of providing training, management and support. The variation amongst these unit costs is mainly due to differences in the ratios of the number of foster carers to the number of fostered children. Northern Ireland has the highest unit cost because there are 1,800 approved carers in Northern Ireland following a successful recruitment campaign by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and only 1,680 fostered children, although there is still a regional shortage of carers.

4.7.4 It is useful to compare these estimates of the average expenditure required per week with the unit cost figures that are published as part of the English expenditure data (Information Centre for Health and Social Care Personal Social Services Expenditure and Unit Costs, 2009), which show the weekly unit cost of foster care in 2008 to be £383 for local authorities own foster care services and £864 for foster care services purchased from independent providers. These published unit costs are of course higher than the corresponding figures of £234 and £765 in 2004 when the original report was written, but the proportional change is much greater for local authorities own foster care (64 per cent) than for independently provided foster care (13 per cent). This adds detail to the overall picture depicted in Figure 1, showing that the sizeable increase in real expenditure per child which occurred between 2004 and 2008 mainly benefited the in-house foster care sector. A further increase of 47 per cent, however, would be required to increase the published overall weekly unit cost of both in house and independent foster care in England of £489 to the required figure shown in Table 7 of £719.97.

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<sup>4</sup> In calculating these values the average number of weeks in foster care is used in both the dividend and divisor.

## 4.8 Additional expenditure required

4.8.1 Table 8 compares actual expenditure in 2007/08 with that required in 2008/09 and calculates the difference between the latter and the former to estimate the additional expenditure required to look after the number of children fostered in each country on 31 March 2008.

*Table 8 Immediate additional expenditure required*

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>N. Ireland</b>	<b>UK total</b>
Expenditure 2007/08 (£m)	1125.2	104.4	88.5	30.3	1348.4
Required expenditure 2008/09 (£m)	1583.2	155.6	126.0	64.1	1928.9
Additional expenditure required (£m)	458.0	51.2	37.4	33.8	580.5

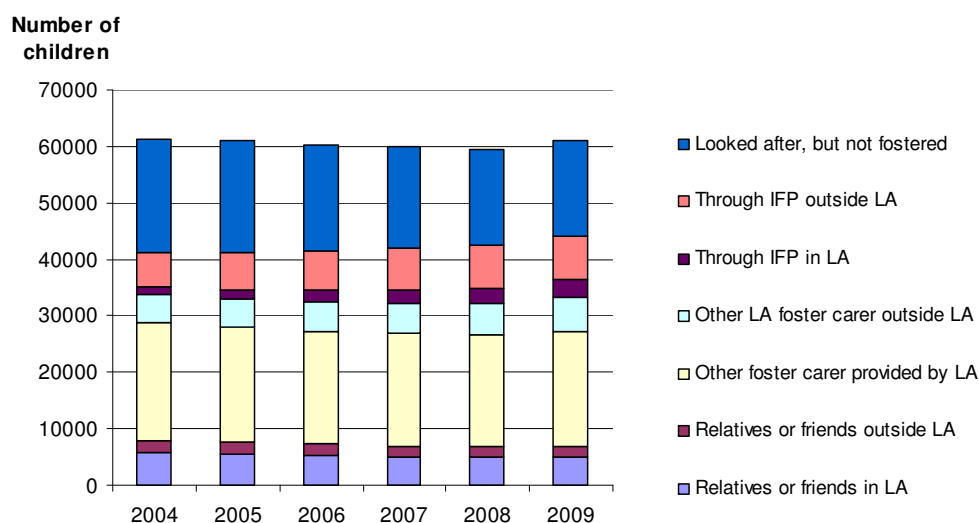
4.8.2 The corresponding additional expenditure required for the UK as a whole shown in the original *Cost of Foster Care* report was £683.3 million for 2004/05. That the figure for 2008/09 has now fallen to £ 580.5 million represents a very considerable narrowing of the gap between actual and required expenditure, in line with the increase in real expenditure per child shown in Figure 1.



## 4.9 Expenditure required over five year period

4.9.1 The expenditure that will be required in the years to 2013 depends on many factors, including what changes occur in the number of children in foster care, their age distribution, the number of foster carers, the skill levels of those carers and the rate of inflation in the economy. Figure 6 (which replaces Table 9 in the original report) shows the number of looked after children in England for the years 2004 to 2009. The total height of the columns shows that over the time period the total number of looked after children fell slightly and then rose again. The six blocks other than the top block in each column represent children in various types of foster placements. The top of these six blocks has risen over the time period with a greater increase in 2009 than previously giving an average annual foster care growth rate between 2004 and 2009 of 1.4 per cent. It is too soon to know whether the rate of increase of 5.2 per cent observed in 2009 will continue into the future, but it seems more likely that a step rise occurred that year and that from 2010 onwards the rate of increase will be closer to the previous trend of 1.1 per cent. In calculating the future cost of allowances, payments and respite care we have therefore used the actual increase in child numbers of 5.2 per cent in the calculations for 2009/10, and after that have assumed an annual rate of increase of 2 per cent in the number of children in foster care. The second and third-from-top top sections of each column represent IFP placements, which have increased over the period by a total of 45 per cent. Local authority foster care fell 3 per cent up till 2008, then suddenly increased by 5 per cent in 2009 as depicted in the two light coloured bands. Between 2004 and 2009 family and friends foster care provision has fallen by 13 per cent.

*Figure 6* Numbers of looked after children in England by type of care



4.9.2 The original report makes the case for the number of foster carers growing at 5 per cent per year to improve the service provided to children. There has been some progress with this as noted above, but the sufficiency duty requires a further improvement. The foster carer numbers used in the calculations for 2008/09 are those in 2009, not 2008, because these were the data available. These carer numbers are increased 5 per cent to give new estimates of 2009 carer numbers that we use in the calculation of costs for 2009/10. We assume that in the next four years the number of foster carers will again grow at 5 per cent per annum, except in Northern Ireland where the shortage of carers is regional rather than national (Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care Fostering Service, 2009) and so we have assumed an annual growth rate of 3 per cent. The Fostering Network's recommended minimum allowances for 2009/10 are set out in Appendix 1 and are used in the calculations for that year. In later years it is assumed that the recommended allowances will increase in line with inflation.

4.9.3 The UK economy is at present moving out of recession, hence inflation as shown by the GDP deflator is predicted at only 2 per cent until 2010. Predictions for 2009/10 are therefore based on a 2 per cent increase in unit costs. It is impossible to know how quickly the recovery will proceed and whether it will be accompanied by a rise in inflation. Our calculations use the inflation rates predicted for the GDP deflator series, shown in Table 9.

**Table 9 Predicted change in the GDP deflator series**

<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>
2 per cent	2.25 per cent	1.5 per cent	2.5 per cent

4.9.4 Table 10 shows the expenditure that will be required over the next five years on the basis of the assumptions stated above. The values represent annual rates of growth in expenditure of 7.4 per cent in 2009/10, 5.5 per cent in 2010/11, 4.8 per cent in 2011/12 because of the lower rate of inflation, and 5.8 per cent in 2012/13.

**Table 10 Expenditure required over five year period**

	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>N. Ireland</b>	<b>UK total</b>
Expenditure 2007/08 (£m)	1125.2	104.4	88.5	30.3	1348.4
Required expenditure 2008/09 (£m)	1583.2	155.6	126.0	64.1	1928.9
Required expenditure 2009/10 (£m)	1700.8	167.2	135.3	68.8	2072.2
Required expenditure 2010/11 (£m)	1795.1	176.2	142.8	72.1	2186.1
Required expenditure 2011/12 (£m)	1881.1	184.3	149.5	74.9	2289.9
Required expenditure 2012/13 (£m)	1991.1	194.8	158.2	78.7	2422.7

## **5 Conclusion**

- 5.1 The calculations in this report bring together data relating to the four countries of the United Kingdom. Obtaining and compiling this information has not been an easy task owing to the different ways in which information is made available in the four countries and the different definitions that are used. Improving the usability of the materials would benefit everyone who uses them, and greater consistency could be achieved without countries having to sacrifice their individuality. Comparing the approaches taken in different countries would allow other countries to adopt the best practices that have been developed elsewhere. For example, Welsh data are presented in an on-line viewing system that allows users to view items of their choice, while the idea for Figure 1 in this report came from Scotland, whose statistical service was very willing to provide additional unpublished data on request.
- 5.2 As outlined in paragraph 4.7.4 this report has shown that there was a sizeable increase in real expenditure per child in foster care over the period 2004 to 2008 which mainly benefited the in-house foster care sector, although the number of placements by independent fostering providers continued to grow at a steady rate. The gap between actual and required expenditure for a properly resourced fostering service has narrowed considerably and is now £580.5 million.
- 5.3 Assuming that the number of children in foster care grows at 2 per cent per annum after 2009/10, the number of foster carers increase at 5 per cent per year (3 per cent in Northern Ireland after 2009/10), the Fostering Network recommended minimum allowances for 2009-10 are paid and the rate of inflation is as predicted by the GDP deflator series, expenditure needs to increase as shown in Table 9 to a UK total of £2,422.7 million in 2012/13.
- 5.4 The predicted costs also need to be considered within the wider context of other initiatives and forthcoming changes in policies. Since 2008, eleven local authorities have been piloting the 'Staying Put' programme that enables young people to stay with their foster carers until they are 21. The potential for this programme to be rolled out nationally will have obvious cost implications, and will also impact on the availability of foster carers. The evaluation of 'Staying Put' is being carried out by colleagues at CCFR, and is due to report in September 2011.

5.5 The new sufficiency duty for looked after children comes into force from April 2010. The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requires local authorities to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children within the local authority area and to meet the needs of the children. The duty will require looked after children commissioners to source sufficient placements and facilitate placement choice. This will have an obvious impact on the need for sufficient local authority foster carers to meet a range of needs.

## Appendix 1

### The Fostering Network's recommended minimum allowances for foster carers

2008/09

Outside London

Age	Weekly allowance (£)	Plus extra allowances at the times below:	Gross Weekly Amount including extra (£)	Annual Amount (£)
0-4	121.68	2 weeks holiday	131.04	6814.08
5-10	138.61	1 week Christmas/ Religious Festival	149.27	7762.16
11-15	172.55	1 week birthday	185.82	9662.80
16+	209.86		226	11752.16

In London

Age	Weekly allowance (£)	Plus extra allowances at the times below:	Gross Weekly Amount including extra (£)	Annual Amount (£)
0-4	142.81	2 weeks holiday	153.80	7997.36
5-10	162.80	1 week Christmas/ Religious Festival	175.32	9116.80
11-15	202.74	1 week birthday	218.34	11353.44
16+	246.21		265.15	13787.76

2009/10

Outside London

Age	Weekly allowance (£)	Plus extra allowances at the times below:	Gross Weekly Amount including extra (£)	Annual Amount (£)
0-4	125.09	2 weeks holiday	134.71	7005.04
5-10	142.49	1 week Christmas/ Religious Festival	153.45	7979.44
11-15	177.38	1 week birthday	191.02	9933.28
16+	215.74		232.34	12081.44

In London

Age	Weekly allowance (£)	Plus extra allowances at the times below:	Gross Weekly Amount including extra (£)	Annual Amount (£)
0-4	146.81	2 weeks holiday	158.10	8221.36
5-10	167.36	1 week Christmas/ Religious Festival	180.23	9372.16
11-15	208.42	1 week birthday	224.45	11671.52
16+	253.10		272.57	14173.60

## Appendix 2

### National minimum allowances

#### National Minimum allowances 2008/09

Age	Weekly allowance (£)
<b>Base</b>	
Under 1	103
1-4	105
5-10	116
11-15	133
16+	155
<b>South East</b>	
Under 1	114
1-4	117
5-10	130
11-15	148
16+	174
<b>London</b>	
Under 1	119
1-4	122
5-10	136
11-15	154
16+	181

### Appendix 3 Total Costs

Cost	2008/09	£42,389	£54,067	£220.30	£44.06	£200.76	£165.23	£36,001	£60,385.33	£2,529.33	£44.06
	2009/10	£42,813	£54,608	£222.50	£44.50	£202.77	£166.88	£36,361	£60,989.18	£2,554.62	£44.50

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
2008/09	No of carers	Supporting social workers	Manager	Support groups	Sons & daughters support	Out of hours	Support events	Support workers	Educational support	Equipment	Independent support
Assumption		10	5	1				2	1.5		
Unit to which costs apply		foster carer households per social worker	social workers per manager	per month per 10 foster carer households	per year per foster carer household	per year per foster carer household	per year per foster carer household	per 50 foster carer households	posts per 50 foster carer households	per foster carer household	A&M per year per foster carer household
Unit	50	£211,945	£54,067	£13,218	£2,203	£10,038	£8,262	£72,002	£90,578	£126,467	£2,203
England	39679	£168,195,313	£42,906,490	£10,489,540	£1,748,257	£7,965,956	£6,556,161	£57,139,347	£71,880,885	£100,361,285	£1,748,257
Scotland	3328	£14,107,059	£3,598,700	£879,790	£146,632	£668,129	£549,885	£4,792,453	£6,028,871	£8,417,610	£146,632
Wales	3046	£12,911,689	£3,293,762	£805,241	£134,207	£611,515	£503,291	£4,386,362	£5,518,011	£7,704,339	£134,207
N. Ireland	1800	£7,630,020	£1,946,412	£475,848	£79,308	£361,368	£297,414	£2,592,072	£3,260,808	£4,552,794	£79,308
Total		£202,844,082	£51,745,363	£12,650,419	£2,108,403	£9,606,968	£7,906,751	£68,910,234	£86,688,576	£121,036,028	£2,108,403

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
2009/10	No of carers	Supporting social workers	Manager	Support groups	Sons & daughters support	Out of hours	Support events	Support workers	Educational support	Equipment	Independent support
Unit	50	£216,184	£55,148	£13,482	£2,247	£10,239	£8,427	£73,442	£92,390	£128,996	£2,247
England	41663	£180,137,180	£45,952,851	£11,234,298	£1,872,383	£8,531,539	£7,021,649	£61,196,241	£76,984,428	£107,486,936	£1,872,383
Scotland	3494	£15,108,660	£3,854,207	£942,255	£157,043	£715,566	£588,927	£5,132,717	£6,456,921	£9,015,261	£157,043
Wales	3198	£13,828,419	£3,527,619	£862,413	£143,735	£654,933	£539,024	£4,697,794	£5,909,790	£8,251,347	£143,735
N. Ireland	1890	£8,171,751	£2,084,607	£509,633	£84,939	£387,025	£318,530	£2,776,109	£3,492,325	£4,876,042	£84,939
Total		£217,246,010	£55,419,284	£13,548,599	£2,258,100	£10,289,063	£8,468,130	£73,802,861	£92,843,464	£129,629,586	£2,258,100



Cost	2008/09	£27,061.65	£2,203.00	£1,101.50	£12,667.25
	2009/10	£27,332.27	£2,225.03	£1,112.52	£12,793.92

		(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)	(21)	(22)
2008/09	No of carers	Admin	Panel	Training costs staff	Recruitment	Training	Allowances	Respite Allowances	Payment	Respite Payment	Total
Assumption Unit to which costs apply		2.5 posts per 50 foster carer households	10 foster carer households per panel	12 posts per 50 foster carer households	15 per cent of number of foster carer households except NI 5 per cent						
Unit	50	£67,654	£11,015	£13,218	£95,004						
England	39679	£53,688,961	£8,741,284	£10,489,540	£75,393,572	£29,291,135	£382,061,944	£8,808,793	£534,219,563	£11,534,250	£1,583,220,532
Scotland	3328	£4,503,059	£733,158	£879,790	£6,323,491	£2,705,315	£36,154,253	£833,570	£62,821,072	£1,356,360	£155,645,829
Wales	3046	£4,121,489	£671,034	£805,241	£5,787,667	£2,248,103	£30,340,280	£699,523	£44,327,504	£957,068	£125,960,532
N. Ireland	1800	£2,435,549	£396,540	£475,848	£1,140,053	£1,328,500	£14,847,423	£342,321	£21,368,783	£461,370	£64,071,738
Total		£64,749,057	£10,542,016	£12,650,419	£88,644,782	£35,573,053	£463,403,900	£10,684,207	£662,736,921	£14,309,048	£1,928,898,631
2009/10	No of carers	Admin	Panel	Training costs staff	Recruitment	Training	Allowances	Respite Allowances	Payment	Respite Payment	Total
Unit	50	£69,007	£11,235	£13,482	£96,904						
England	41663	£57,500,877	£9,361,915	£11,234,298	£80,746,516	£31,370,805	£413,183,182	£9,526,322	£573,238,959	£12,376,712	£1,700,829,474
Scotland	3494	£4,822,776	£785,213	£942,255	£6,772,459	£2,897,392	£39,099,234	£901,469	£67,409,523	£1,455,429	£167,214,350
Wales	3198	£4,414,115	£718,677	£862,413	£6,198,591	£2,407,718	£32,811,678	£756,503	£47,565,185	£1,026,972	£135,320,661
N. Ireland	1890	£2,608,472	£424,694	£509,633	£1,220,996	£1,422,824	£16,056,835	£370,205	£22,929,558	£495,068	£68,824,185
Total		£69,346,240	£11,290,499	£13,548,599	£94,938,562	£38,098,739	£501,150,929	£11,554,499	£711,143,225	£15,354,181	£2,072,188,670

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