

House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 2PW

5 November 2004

### **Children Bill – Fostering Allowances**

The Children Bill is now reaching its final stages, and BAAF is delighted that the Government has tabled an amendment that will provide the Secretary of State with the power to set a national minimum allowance for foster carers. The introduction of “payments to foster parents” will ensure that foster carers across the country are adequately covered for the actual cost of looking after a child. This is an important step towards improving the recruitment and retention of foster carers and therefore ultimately providing looked after children with stability and continuity of care with foster carers who can meet their needs. (Please do remember that allowances do not include any element of fees or remuneration and we hope that the Government will be prepared to give clear guidance on this important issue at a later stage - BAAF has a position statement on this which we would be happy to send you).

BAAF does, however, have some concerns about the amendment that has been tabled by the Government. There are several issues that we feel need to be addressed in the consideration of the amendment on Wednesday 10 November, in particular:

1. Since the amendment only gives a “power” can we be reassured the Government are determined to exercise this power and has an implementation timetable in mind?
2. We want reassurance about how the allowance will be calculated and who will be involved in agreeing what is reasonable. What will the allowance be expected to cover; will there be variations according to region, age of the child etc? We would be pleased if you would ask whether the two key voluntary stakeholder organisations (BAAF and The Fostering Network) will be formally invited to participate in these discussions.
3. We want reassurance that the implementation of the minimum allowance will not be held up due to insufficient resources. We hope that there will be a new ring-fenced Choice Protects Grant which can allow much needed investment by local authorities in their foster care services. We would also observe, however, that some local authorities already pay a good level of allowances and others could save money by increasing allowances but reducing turnover of foster carers, thus saving on recruitment costs, and use of expensive out of authority

placements. Some relative foster carers currently receive the lowest allowances and the introduction of a minimum allowance could encourage more relative carers to offer to foster – however this will have higher costs initially, hence the need for more funding.

I hope that you are able to support this amendment, but are also able to draw attention to these very important issues. These concerns need to be clarified to ensure that the power to introduce a national fostering allowance is translated into a workable reality.

Please find attached a briefing on fostering allowances that addresses the establishment of a national minimum allowance for foster carers in more detail. If you have any queries, please contact me on 020 7593 2011 ([felicity.collier@baaf.org.uk](mailto:felicity.collier@baaf.org.uk)) or our Parliamentary Officer, Rose Durey, on 020 7593 2032 ([rose.durey@baaf.org.uk](mailto:rose.durey@baaf.org.uk)).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Felicity Collier". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Felicity Collier  
**Chief Executive**