

I am writing with concerns about a news segment on foster care. While I welcome coverage about foster care, this segment featured a dangerously misleading and idealised image of the sector put forward by an agency owned by a private equity firm and making large profits.

Although fostering was described as "a job", carers are denied basic employment rights such as sick pay and pensions and earn an average of just £1.70 per hour. Without sick pay, many carers have faced impossible choices. This includes "Jenny" who refused medical treatment after contracting coronavirus, to avoid losing the child she cared for, (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-foster-care-children-sick-pay-a9500386.html>).

While fostering was presented as an easy way to make money, the reality is that, although extremely rewarding, it is also very challenging, requiring skill and professionalism. Suggesting otherwise does a disservice to carers and puts vulnerable children at risk.

The interviewee, Steve Christie, runs the UK's largest private fostering agency, which in their latest accounts reported profits of £4m and a 250k salary for its MD. The company is owned by private equity firm Stirling Square Capital Partners, which profits from the privatisation of foster care while denying basic employment rights to foster care workers themselves.

Local Authorities are often forced to use private providers when they don't have enough carers themselves, siphoning public money into private hands. Cash strapped councils then can't afford to pay their carers properly, the shortage gets worse and the cycle continues.

We hope you will consider running another segment to tell this side of the story. Do contact the Foster Care Workers Union at the IWGB for any case studies or spokespeople. <https://fosteriwgb.co.uk/>