

Introduction

Fostering is where people provide a caring and safe environment in their own home for children and young people, including those who have disabilities and/or challenging behaviour. This can be done on a full or part-time basis and ranges from day or weekend care to a few months or even a permanent basis.

We appreciate that choosing to foster is not a decision to be taken lightly and we hope that the different options described within this information pack will inform you sufficiently to take the next step. We'll be with you all the way, offering help, encouragement, support and guidance, assisting you through every aspect of the application process ensuring that you make the right decision.

Types of Placements

As a foster carer, you will have the opportunity to care for many different types of children including:

Under 5's

Babies and children in this age group have diverse needs and require Foster Carers who are consistent, fair and loving.

An ability to work very closely with parents and facilitate contact often in your own home are some of the requirements.

Carers will receive a basic fee (52 weeks per year) and a weekly fostering allowance for each child placed.

5-11 Years

In addition to the general level of care, children in this age group will require support with school.

We are seeking to recruit Foster Carers who are willing and able to take a child to school, recognise the importance of education, talents and skills and will actively support and encourage each child to reach their full potential.

The children may have had disruptive experiences and will need your help to enable them to make sense of this.

Carers will receive a basic fee (52 weeks per year) and a weekly fostering allowance for each child placed.

Teenagers

Finding their feet, testing boundaries and seeing how far they can push things is typical to all teenagers. But for a young person who has had distressing and unsettling experiences, teenage years can be especially difficult – both for them and you. Helping them to prepare for adult life, grow in self-confidence and plan for the future, your reward will be their development, friendship and trust.

Carers will receive a basic fee (52 weeks per year) and a weekly fostering allowance and teen allowance for each young person placed.

Siblings

Staying together is very important to brothers and sisters who have had changes in their lives. They need the security and comfort of each other as much as they need you. We always need people to look after groups of brothers and sisters, and if this type of care appeals to you, you might find yourself caring for three, four, or even more children.

Carers will receive a higher allowance for each child (52 weeks per year) and a weekly fostering allowance for each child placed.

Mothers and Babies

You may feel able to help some mothers who need support and security and your role could be to teach and encourage them without taking over their responsibilities as mothers. You will be involved in undertaking an assessment of the mother work during the placement.

Carers will receive a basic fee (52 weeks per year) and a weekly fostering allowance for the baby and an additional fee and weekly allowance in respect of the mother.

Assessment/Remand

This is a Scheme which pays a higher rate of fee in recognition that one Carer will be at home as this is a job of work. One or two placements may be made for a period of up to 6-8 weeks. The Foster Carer will actively participate in the assessment and support the young person during this time. Some of these Foster Carers may chose to offer a remand placement. This is of a similar duration and occurs when a young person has been remanded to the care of the Local Authority by the Court. The young person may have conditions attached to the placement, for example a curfew. The Foster Carer will receive additional training in Court issues.

Carers will receive a higher allowance for each young person (52 weeks per year) and a weekly fostering allowance for each young person placed.

Specialist

This is a scheme to provide the most difficult to place teenagers within a caring and supportive environment where they are offered consistency to enable change. Foster Carers require excellent communication skills, an ability to be consistent even in the most stressful of situations and the resilience to keep going when the young person appears indifferent.

Carers will receive a higher allowance for each young person (52 weeks per year) and a weekly fostering allowance for each young person placed.

Long Term

Some children and young people may not be able to return to live with their families. These children need foster carers who can make a permanent commitment and care for them until they are old enough to live independently.

Carers will receive a basic fee (when a child is placed) and a weekly fostering allowance for each child placed. If the young person is aged 11+ the carer will also receive a teen allowance.

Short Break

This involves having disabled children to stay with you for a short time so that their families can have a regular break and the children can make new friends and broaden their horizons with you. From a few hours each week to a weekend a month, for planned breaks and sometimes in an emergency, you can provide help and support to many families. Carers receive a daily allowance for each child (in placement).

Contract Carers

This involves having up to 5 links for particular disabled children and being available to offer emergency placements as required.

Carers will receive a basic fee and disability enhancement (32 weeks per year) and a daily allowance for each child (in placement).

Respite/Shared Care

This involves offering weekend placements for children either living with their family or for full-time foster carers, to give them regular break to support the placement. Carers will receive a basic fee, and the 11+ teen allowance and a fostering allowance. All are paid pro-rata for the number of nights a child in there.

Whatever your age or personal circumstances – you can do it. As long as you have a spare room in your home to look after a child and your home meets the required standards in respect of cleanliness and safety, it doesn't matter whether you own a house, rent a flat or receive housing benefit. What matters most is that you are able to help children feel comfortable with their surroundings and give them a opportunity to reach their true potential. You must also be able to demonstrate a mature, responsible attitude and have the skills and qualities needed to care for children separated from their own families.

The approval process

If you decide that fostering is for you, there are a number of steps that need to be taken. North Tyneside Council is committed to ensuring that the entire process is completed inside the timescales set by the Government.

Stage 1 (Two months)

Required to complete Day 1 and 2 of Preparation, workbook on Recording and complete your individual profiles

Subject to outcome of statutory checks and completion of tasks above, the Agency will determine whether applicant is suitable to proceed to Stage 2.

If suitable you will receive a letter confirming this and proceed to Stage 2.

If unsuitable you will receive the reasons for this decision in writing.

Stage 2

From the date of the confirmation letter you have 6 months to return the Stage 2 agreement. Should you return the agreement after 6 months you will have a re-entry interview and may need to start the process again at Stage 1.

On receipt of signed Stage 2 agreement the Agency will allocate a Social Worker within 2 working days.

The Social Worker will make contact and undertake the first visit within 5 working days of being allocated

Your assessment will be completed, presented to the Fostering Panel and a decision made by the Agency Decision Maker within 16 weeks of your signed Stage 2 agreement being accepted.

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- As part of the assessment process you will be expected to attend pre-approval courses.
- All the information is brought together by the Assessing Social Worker who then writes a report outlining your skills, your future training needs and areas where perhaps you need more help. You will see the Assessing Social Worker's report and, you can make your own comments in writing.
- The Fostering Team Manager will then either complete a quality assurance visit or a telephone call and the report based on this will be shared with you.
- The social worker then presents the report to the Fostering Panel and you are invited to attend the Fostering Panel.
- The Fostering Panel can; recommend your approval to the decision maker, not recommend your approval and they will provide reasons or recommend your application is deferred for further work to the Decision Maker. If you are approved, you will be given further information about training and the Training, Support and Development Standards and the Core Training that you must complete during the first year of your approval. The approval at this stage is provisional and is ratified at the first review, one year later.
- If your approval is not recommended, you are able to appeal the decision and information will be provided in writing about how you can do this.
- A child or young person is placed with you. Their age and the length of their stay depends on the type of fostering you are approved for.
- You will need to be reviewed every year and whenever your circumstances change in a considerable way.

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What support and training will I receive?

We understand that caring for children can be a demanding role and that is why at North Tyneside Council we supply you with a wide range of support, aimed to help you provide and maintain a high standard of care for the children you look after and develop new, personal skills enabling you to undertake the tasks required of you.

Just as each child placed has their own social worker, every foster carer has a fostering social worker called a Supervising Social Worker to supervise/support them too. This supervisory/support is flexible to meet your needs but generally is a monthly visit in your home. We can provide access to specialist advice for foster carers through a number of services including CAMHS.

In North Tyneside Council we encourage foster carers to make use of support groups. These offer the opportunity to meet with other carers and share ideas and concerns. You can also be put in touch with other experienced carers if you wish. If you occasionally need a break from looking after children, either for a couple of hours, a weekend or a week, we'll provide an alternative respite placement or support, through a wide range of outreach type resources.

The children of our foster carers receive individual support from their own group within which they share experiences and gain support to one another. The 'Children Who Foster Group' enjoys national status and recognition.

Every carer receives pre-approval training during their assessment period. This is designed to provide prospective foster carers with the knowledge and information that they require to gain a more realistic picture of what is involved in caring for children in care. Pre-approval training follows key modules and it is necessary for ALL prospective carers to complete the course before they are approved as foster carers.

Training offers newly approved foster carers the opportunity to meet with key personnel, including experienced foster carers within North Tyneside. It also provides new carers with information regarding services available, including out of hours support and training opportunities.

What will be asked of me?

As a foster carer you will provide day to day care for any child who needs looking after. You will help to implement a care plan for individual children. This may include specific responsibilities, eg making sure the child is able to visit her/his family and friends.

In all aspects, you will continually promote the healthy growth and development of a child, particularly with regards to their health and education. Actively encouraging children to learn, you will help them to feel positive about their origins, religion and culture.

You will build relationships with children and also assist and support parents and other people who are important to them creating and sustaining good relationships. At all times you will ensure that the children you are caring for are kept safe from harm and abuse and taught how to get help if anything untoward should happen to them.

Helping children to develop secure attachments with adults is another essential element of a foster carer's role. Enabling them to realise that some adults can provide them with safe and effective care and to speak up for the children in order to ensure that they receive good care and opportunity to develop.

As a North Tyneside Foster Carer it will quickly become apparent that you are working as part of a closely-knit team, the council team and with staff and professionals from many agencies. You will work within policy and guidelines that are in place and ensure that each child fulfils their potential. You will take part in meetings about the child you are caring for, keep written records about their care and contribute to reports about the child, dealing responsibly with confidential information. And at every stage carers are offered supervision/support and training to develop their skills and understanding.

What skills are required?

To be a successful carer, you will need an ability to provide a good standard of care for other people's children, promoting healthy development and achievement. An ability to work closely with these children's families and those important to the child and an ability to set appropriate boundaries and manage a child's behaviour without resorting to physical or inappropriate punishment.

This ability will probably be natural to you and if not, with our support, you will soon acquire it. You also need a knowledge of child development and must be able to listen and communicate with children in a manner appropriate to their age and understanding.

Ensuring that children are cared for in a home safe from harm and abuse, you will support the children on how to get help when they need to. Working with other professionals, you will contribute to care plans for children and you will also need to communicate with a variety of people and promote equality.

Making the best use of training opportunities, you should be willing to develop your skills and appreciate how personal experiences have affected you and your family as well as how fostering will affect everyone concerned. Your strong character must be able to sustain positive relationships during periods of stress. You should have people and links within the community that will provide you with support whenever you need it.

We can help you to develop many of the skills and networks you will need, but the most important skill you will possess is that you care enough to make a difference for the better in a child's life.

If you have any further questions about your suitability to Foster, please contact us and we will be pleased to help you.

Valuing strengths in a diverse community

North Tyneside Council's Fostering Service works hard to eliminate discrimination and promote fair and equal treatment between all sections of the community.

Equality of opportunity involves the recognition and removal of discriminatory barriers for adults and children, and we welcome applicants from families and individuals from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Similarly, we are committed to considering the application from lesbian and gay individuals and couples as we recognise the strengths you have developed to be who you are today.

If you identify yourself as being disabled, this would not bar you from applying to be considered as a prospective foster carers, as it is your personal strengths , and what you will be able to offer as a foster carer that will be considered.

We actively encourage people who have parented before and particularly welcome applicants who want to foster teenagers.



Foster Carer Support Group

"Support Groups are a place where you can go to share concerns, seek help and advice from the Fostering Team and support from other Carers".

***Violet
Mainstream Foster Carer***

Mother and baby Foster Carer

"The reward is knowing that you have helped Mothers and given them the confidence to look after their child"

Mandy, Foster Carer, Mother and Baby Foster Carer

Short Break Foster Carer

"the support we give to the family and to the child helps them stay together as a family"

***Julie
Short Break Carer***

"Fostering is a way of life and the reward is to watch Young People grow, achieve and have fun. This cannot be equalled, it is good for you as well as them and to successfully help one child on their way in life is the biggest buzz ever"

***Audrey
Long Term Foster Carer***

Chrysalis Foster Carer

"As a Chrysalis Carer we had lots of support which helped immensely"

Chrysalis Foster Carer

Foster Carer

The benefits outway the negatives, it is very rewarding to see the achievements the children can make with the support I provide"

***Jason
Foster Carer***

Fostering teenagers
"Fostering teenagers can be really hard work but it can also be so enjoyable and satisfying when you see the young person making positive steps into adulthood."

***Gail
Specialist Foster Carer***

Sibling Foster Carer

"It is rewarding to know that I can help keep part of a family together"

***Alison
Sibling Foster Carer***

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