Fostering information guide

CITY OF YORK COUNCIL

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"Because of the support from foster carers who treated me as their own from day one, I have been able to grow and succeed into my own person"

What is **fostering?**

Fostering provides a safe nurturing and stable environment for children and young people who are unable to live with their birth parents of other family members.

Fostering can be very short term, like an overnight stay or longer term. In some cases, children and young people are unable to return home and need long term foster care or adoption.

Our children and young people will likely have experienced distress at moving into a new environment and need stable loving foster homes to support them. They might have experienced trauma, violence or abuse and might show this through challenging behaviour.

We know that fostering is not easy but we also know it is incredibly rewarding and foster carers have unique opportunities to help change children and young people's lives for the better, at a time they need it most.

Fostering with us

- **Allows you to use your existing skills, and learn more through training**
- **Offers flexible, home based self employment**
- **Is financially rewarding with a basic allowance and skills fee**
- **Offers fantastic support to foster families**

Why are children and young people **fostered?**

There are many reasons why children and young people may need foster care including:

- If their parents cannot look after them due to significant illness or mental health problems
- If a parent has a drug or alcohol related problem which seriously affects their ability to care for their child properly
- If the child has experienced physical or sexual harm, or been seriously neglected or has witnessed domestic abuse in the home .
- If there are major tensions between parents and adolescents in the home
- If children and young people with disabilities need short term home based care to support their parents or carers
- When a young person is an unaccompanied refugee or is seeking asylum in the UK

What to expect

Children benefit hugely from being in a warm, loving family environment and make progress in all aspects of their development, during time in foster care.

Many of the children and young people we work with, will have had difficult early lives which can impact behaviour and development significantly.

Foster carers need patience, understanding, compassion (and a sense of humour) to help children settle into a new environment and help them to feel safe and secure

Every child and young person is our care is unique, as is their individual circumstances. This means we need foster carers from a variety of different backgrounds, with varied experiences and skills to meet the needs of our children.

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"I came out of a bad situation and fostering gave me the chance to have better and happier opportunities"

The fostering **role**

National minimum standards are set for fostering services in order to make sure children and young people are well looked after. In York we have high aspirations and set high expectations for our foster carers. All foster carers are assessed to make sure they can demonstrate abilities in the following four main areas:

- Caring for children
- Providing a safe and caring environment
- Working as part of a team
- Their own skills and professional development. This includes the ability to build up a support network and use training opportunities

Deciding to foster affects the whole family. Many of our carers have children of their own, still living at home and feel that fostering is a positive experience for the whole family.

If you have children of your own, you need to consider how they will share their toys, home and parents with a foster child and how you will balance the needs of a fostered child or young person, with those of your own child.

What are the different types of fostering?

Children can need different types of fostering over different periods of time. It might be one or two nights for a planned short break, or an emergency situation which has less notice. Some children need care for a period of up to two years whilst an assessment of the child or young person's needs is being done.

Other children and young people might remain in foster care until adulthood which depends on circumstances and the legal situation.

Short break fostering

Offers full time foster carers or a child or young person's parents, a break. This could be for a weekend or a week or two over a holiday period if needed. Short break foster carers may have an ongoing link with a child or young person as a means to provide support on a long term basis. Sometimes children in residential schools sometimes need care with a foster family at weekends or school holidays.

Fostering sibling groups

We are always looking for foster carers who can look after sibling groups of two or more children. We try to place brothers and sisters together if in their best interests, but this is not always possible. When siblings cannot be placed together, foster families work closely together to make sure brothers and sisters can have plenty of contact with each other.

"My foster carers have helped me feel more confident"

Children who may become adopted

If a child cannot return home, then plans are made for their long term care. For younger children this can mean finding an adoptive placement. When this happens, the foster carer helps to prepare the child for their move to a new family. Foster carers are also closely involved with helping the adoptive family understand the needs of the child and prepare for their arrival.

Long term fostering

For older children and young people, if it is right for them and your family, we might look to them remaining with you as a long term foster placement. Long term fostering allows a child or young person to keep in touch with their family where it is safe to do so, whilst they grow up in a safe and caring environment with foster carers.

Long term foster carers are supported by the child or young person's social worker and a family placement worker during the placement. Long term fostering is very different from adoption. some children do not want to be adopted but need to be in a safe, caring environment as they grow up. Long term fostering provides security and helps children and young people achieve their potential.

Parent and child placements

Also known as mother and baby foster placements. These are a specialist type of fostering, where a parent and their own child, often a young mother and baby would stay with a foster carer to gain extra support and guidance. The foster carers supports and encourages the parent to care for their child, without taking parental responsibility.

"My foster carer helped my independence skills and taught me how to wash my clothes. I have moved now but I still keep in touch with them "

Support for **foster carers**

Finance and payments

We provide a weekly base allowance to foster carers which covers day to day expenses, like clothing, food and household costs. when looking after each child. This amount varies depending on the age of the child or young person in your care.

Base allowance (weekly allowance per child)

Age of child or young person	2024 weekly allowance
0 – 4	£182.00
5 – 10	£201.04
11 - 15	£227.01
16 – 17	£267.05

Additional weekly payments based on the foster carers skill level and number of children in their care

Level	Skill fee	Additional capacity (total payments)	
		2 children	3+ children
Accredited	£125.00	£62.50	£125.00
Advanced	£250.00	£100.00	£200.00
Advanced +	£375.00	£112.50	£225.00
Specialist	£500	£125.00	£250.00

Professional support for **foster carers**

We are committed to supporting our foster carers to improve the lives of children and young people they are caring for.

We offer a range of support and training to all our foster carers so they can foster with confidence. This includes:

- A supervising social worker who will visit your home and offer advice and guidance, as well as providing regular, professional supervision.
- Your supervising social worker will review your development to offer appropriate training and development opportunities
- Support from the fostered child or young person's social worker who will be able to help you understand an individual child of young person's needs.
- Support from other local foster carers either through the York Area Foster Carer Association (YAFCA), various support groups, and informal networks of support which grow between foster carers in our community.
- Linking with other experienced foster carers to help you settle into the fostering role and wider support network
- Membership of the Fostering Network once you are approved as a foster carer. This provides general support along with help and advice during times of difficulty
- The Emergency Duty Team (EDT) are available to deal with any crises which might happen outside usual office hours.

"My foster carers have made me happy"

Training and development **for foster carers**

Skills to foster training

This is mandatory training for all prospective foster carers and is a course of sessions run by social workers, experienced foster carers and other professionals working within children's services. Skills to foster training covers issues relating to fostering and the children in our care and fostering expectations. It is essential you attend this training to give you an insight into the demands and expectations fostering brings. Attending Skills to Foster, also forms the initial basis of the assessment process and helps you and us consider if fostering is right for you and your family.

Additional training and development

Professional training and development is an essential element of the fostering role and links to your progress through the various levels of foster care. Our Workforce Development Unit (WDU) offers a wide range of training opportunities for foster carers which are available to all. Your supervising social worker will help you look at what training is right for you and ensure that you are equipped with the skills you need to foster.

A Professional Development Plan (PDP) will be created by your supervising social worker and undertaken annually to help identify training which could be beneficial to you.

All foster carers are expected to complete an induction course to help in the completion of the national required training, support and development standards workbook within 12 months of approval

What **next?**

- Attend a virtual information session to hear more about fostering and the support available from the team in York and our foster carers.

  Dates for information sessions are available here www.york.gov.uk/fostering

- Following the information event, we will be in touch with you to complete an initial enquiry over the telephone. We will look at your circumstances and consider a home visit to talk more about the fostering role.

- A home visit will be arranged to discuss the training and assessment process and whether fostering is right for you.

- If you would like to proceed with fostering at this point and we feel you can help support our children and young people, we will invite you to attend the next 'Skills to Foster' course.

  This helps you understand more about the needs and experiences of children and young people in foster care

"They have helped me with everything.
I enjoy the activities that we do like going to the beach.
They help me with school and help me with my homework.
help me make my lunch and organise me"

What **next?**

- Following 'Skills to Foster' training, if you decide to proceed and we agree, you will be provided with an application form. The fostering assessment starts on receipt of this.
- The assessment consists of around 10 sessions with an allocated assessing social worker and at the end, produces an assessment report for consideration by the fostering panel
- The fostering panel considers all applications to foster and you will be invited to attend the presentation of your case. Panel will make a recommendation as to suitability to foster which will be considered for a final decision by the Agency Decision Maker.
- Once approved as a foster carer your supervising social worker will talk about children and young people who would benefit from being placed with you and your family.
- Your induction as a foster carer will begin and you will be part of our fostering community.
- Your fostering approval and professional development are reviewed annually to support you best.

"My foster carer helps me to clean. she also helped me regain contact with my dad. She sticks up for me"

Meet our **Foster carers**

Chez

Chez and her husband both grew up in large families and knew they wanted to continue this tradition. They were worried at first about how fostering might impact on their own birth children but fostering has been such a positive experience, that one of their daughters has become a foster carer herself.

Since starting to foster, Chez's family has grown more with three long term foster children and two adopted children. Her only concern now, is making sure there is enough of Chez to go around her two foster grandchildren as well as her two birth grandchildren.

Steve

Steve and his wife, became foster carers having volunteered at a York charity that supports and mentors young people. Steve now fosters a young man and enjoys the opportunities fostering brings to do things together as a family and to get involved in their local community.

Lesley

Lesley worked with children and young people and started fostering on a respite basis at weekends. A few years later, Lesley left full-time employment to focus on being a foster carer.

"My foster carer has changed my life"

Lesley now has eleven grandchildren which includes four foster grandchildren and is looking forward to seeing her family continue to grow

Contact us:

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https://www.fostering.york.gov.uk/