

Fostering in York

Information Booklet



What is fostering?

Foster carers are ordinary people doing an extraordinary role, providing care for children and young people who are not able to live safely with their birth families.

Sometimes family difficulties or significant illness mean that a child or young person needs a foster home. In some cases fostering can be very short term, just overnight. In other cases, children may be unable to return home and need long term foster care or adoption.

The children and young people in foster care are likely to experience some distress at moving into a new environment and will need a stable home and the support of caring, loving foster carers to help them.

Some children and young people needing care have experienced violence or abuse and may show this through challenging and demanding behaviour. Fostering is not always easy, but being a foster carer gives you a unique opportunity to help change children and young people's lives for the better.

Fostering:

- is immensely rewarding and challenging
- allows you to use your existing skills with children and young people
- is flexible, home-based, self-employed work
- allows you to earn up to £25,000 per year
- offers fantastic training and support

The Fostering Role

The Standards for Fostering Services set a minimum level of care when it comes to looking after children. In York we have high aspirations for our children and young people and set high expectations of our foster carers. As part of this, all foster carers are assessed to demonstrate their abilities in 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 ability to build up a support network and use training opportunities).

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

If you do have children of your own, it's important to consider how they will cope with sharing their toys, their home and their parents with a foster child and how you will balance the needs and demands of the foster child or young person with the needs of your own child.



Why children and young people are fostered

There are a variety of reasons why children and young people may need foster care, including:

- if their parents are unable to 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 adequately.
- if the child has experienced physical or sexual harm or has been seriously neglected or 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 require short term home based care to support their parents or carers.
- when a young person is an unaccompanied refugee or seeking asylum in the UK.

Each child and young person in our care is unique, as are their individual, circumstances which is why we need foster carers from different backgrounds and with varied experiences and skills.

What to expect

Children benefit enormously from a warm and loving family and make progress in all aspects of their development throughout their time in a foster family.

Many of the children and young people needing a foster family will have had difficult early lives and this can significantly affect their behaviour and development. Foster carers need lots of patience, understanding and compassion to help children settle into a new environment and to help them feel safe and secure.



Meet our community of York foster carers

Chez

Chez and her husband both grew up in large families and knew this was a tradition that they would like to continue. They were initially worried about the impact fostering might have on their own birth children but it has been such a positive experience that one of their daughters has become a foster carer herself.

Since starting fostering, Chez's family has grown further with the addition of three long-term foster children and two adopted children.

Chez's only concern now is ensuring there is enough of her to go around her two foster grandchildren, as well as her two birth grandchildren.

Who can apply?

Foster carers come from all different walks of life. Our first consideration is whether you have the time and space in your life and can offer a child or young person a safe and secure environment. It is important that you can understand some of their feelings and worries and help them to build resilience and coping strategies.

You will need to:

- be patient, tolerant and be able to provide a safe and secure home
- have the time and energy a child or young person will require
- have the support of your family and understand how the fostering role is likely to impact on your own children/grandchildren etc
- be willing to undertake training and develop new skills
- be able to communicate effectively and work positively with a child or young person's family, social workers and others involved in the child's life
- be able to bounce back and overcome problems you may meet
- have enough space in your home. You will need a spare bedroom for each child you wish to foster. However, we accept that to keep siblings together shared bedrooms can be considered
- be prepared for us to learn more about you and your family. By law this involves an assessment process including training, medical references, criminal record and other statutory checks with your local education authority, children's school, health authority etc.

What types of fostering are there?

Due to their varied circumstances, children require different types of fostering over different periods of time. This can be for only one or two nights for some children who require a short break or in an emergency situation or for a period of up to two years, for example whilst the longer term needs of the child are assessed.

For some children who are unable to return home they may need to remain in foster care for the rest of their childhood. This will depend on the child or young person's circumstances and the legal situation.

Short break fostering

These short break foster carers offer a break to full time foster carers or on occasion to parents, often for a weekend or for a week or fortnight over a holiday period. They may have an ongoing link with a child or young person as a way of providing support on a long term basis. Also, children in residential schools sometimes need care with a foster family at weekends and school holidays.



Fostering sibling groups

We have a particular need for foster carers who can look after sibling groups of two or more children. Although we do try to place sisters and brothers together, sometimes this is not possible. When siblings cannot be placed together, foster families work together to make sure that siblings can have plenty of contact with each other.

Children who may be adopted

If a child cannot return home, then plans are made for their long term care. For a younger child this will often mean finding an adoptive placement. In these circumstances the foster carer will help to prepare the child for his or her move to a new family. Carers are also closely involved in helping the adoptive family understand the needs of the child and prepare for the child's arrival.

Long term fostering

For older children and young people, if it is right for them and for your family, we look to them remaining with you as a long term foster placement. Long term fostering allows a child or young person to retain contact 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 by a family placement worker during the placement. Long term fostering is very different from adoption. Some children don't want to be adopted but need to be in a safe and caring environment as they grow up. Long term fostering provides that security and helps these young people achieve their potential.

Mother and Baby Placements

There is sometimes a need for foster carers who can support young mothers and help them care for their babies. The foster carer supports and encourages the young mother to care for her child, without taking over her parental responsibility.



Meet Steve

Steve and his wife realised they were ready to foster after volunteering at a York charity that mentors and helps young people.

They now foster a young man and are immensely thankful for the opportunity to do things as a family and the opportunities to get involved in their local community that it brings.

Support to Foster Carers

Payments

Foster carers receive weekly allowances to cover the cost of looking after each child. The amount varies depending on the age of the child or young person. This allowance covers day-to-day expenses like clothing, food and household costs.

Additionally carers receive payments to reflect the level of skill they develop through fostering. They also receive a weekly base allowance. Details of these payments are in the table below table.

Normal Weekly Allowance

Weekly Child Allowance

Age range	Weekly Allowance 2019/20 (£)
0 - 4	132.02
5 - 10	160.44
11 - 15	183.37
16 - 17	211.35

Additional weekly Foster Carer Fees and Capacity Payments based on the skill level of the carer and the number of children in their care

Grade	Skill Fee (£)	Additional Capacity - Total payments	
		2 Children (£)	3+ Children (£)
Level 1	65.08	32.54	65.08
Level 2	173.55	43.39	86.78
Level 3	496.61	99.32	198.64



Meet Lesley

Having worked with children and young people, Lesley began fostering for respite care on weekends, which led to her leaving full-time employment a few years later to focus on full time fostering.

Twelve years later, Lesley now has eleven grandchildren in total, including four from her foster children, and looks forward to watching her family continue to expand.

Professional Support for York's foster carers

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

City of York Council offers a range of support and training so carers receive the help they need to foster with confidence.

Every foster carer is allocated a supervising social worker who will visit you at home, and offer advice and assistance, as well as providing professional supervision on a regular basis.

They will monitor and review your development so they can offer the appropriate training and development opportunities so you can build confidence in your role as a foster carer.

Foster carers also receive support from the child or young person's social worker who will be able to help you understand a particular child or young person's needs.

City of York Council foster carers also benefit from support from other local foster carers, either through the York Area Foster Carer Association (YAFCA), various carers' support groups or from the informal network of support that develops between foster carers within our fostering community.

Your supervising social worker will link you up with experienced foster carers in your area to help you settle in to the fostering role and wider network of support.

Once approved as a foster carer, you will become a member of the Fostering Network, a national agency, which can provide general support, as well as providing help and advice during difficult times.

There is also an Emergency Duty Team to deal with any crises that may occur outside office hours.



Meet Georgina

Georgina grew up with friends in foster care and quickly realised she wanted her future to include long-term foster caring. After marrying in her early twenties, many people thought she and her husband were too young to take on the responsibility, however she disagreed.

Georgina and her husband have been caring for their foster son for over two years now. Experience has taught her that it's important to take time to look after yourself so you have the patience and resilience to support a foster child.

She and her husband have now become a family unit with their foster son.

Training and Development

All carers receive 'Skills to Foster' training before becoming a foster carer. The course is run by social workers, experienced foster carers and other professionals working within services for children. The course covers issues relating to the many aspects of the fostering role and expectations.

We expect all prospective applicants to attend the Skills to Foster training. It will give you an insight into the demands and expectations of the fostering role. It also forms the initial basis of the assessment process and helps us consider together whether fostering is right for you and your family.

Professional training and development is an essential element of the fostering role and is linked to your progress through the various levels of foster care. Our Workforce Development Unit offers a broad range of training opportunities for foster carers. These range from 'Effective Communication' to 'Child Attachment Training' and are available to all foster carers.

Your supervising social worker will help you look at what training is right for you and ensure through an annual Professional Development Plan (PDP) review that you are equipped with all the skills you need to undertake the fostering task.

All foster carers are expected to complete an induction course to assist them in the completion of the national required training, support and development standards workbook within the first 12 months of your fostering approval.

Next Steps

Becoming approved as a foster carer takes between six and eight months from your initial enquiry. This process includes an initial visit, skills to foster course, personal references, criminal conviction and medical checks and a fostering assessment.

Step 1

Once you have had time to read this information pack, a member of the team will call you to arrange to visit you at home to discuss the training and assessment process and whether fostering is right for you.

Step 2

If you are interested in proceeding with your fostering enquiry and we feel you could help support our children and young people, you will be invited to attend the next available Skills to Foster course. This will help you to understand more about the experiences and needs of young people in foster care.

At the end of the training, if you decide to proceed and we agree it appropriate to proceed to assessment, we will provide you with an application form.

Step 3

Your assessment will begin once we receive your application form. The assessment will run over approximately ten sessions.

Fostering is a big decision for you and your family. In order to fully understand how the role will impact on you and what skills you have to offer, the assessment process is very thorough. You will be supported throughout this and it will offer good preparation for fostering.

Together with your assessing social worker you will compile the assessment report. This allows us to learn more about you and your family and the qualities that you have that will help you as a foster carer.

You will see the completed report and have the opportunity to comment on the content and analysis. Your supervising social worker will, in consultation with you, make a recommendation on what number and age of children you would like to foster.

If during your assessment process we consider any information that suggest that your circumstances would not be suitable for fostering, we will discuss this with you.

Step 4

Your completed assessment will then be read and considered by the Fostering Panel.

You will be invited to attend part of the panel meeting in person. The panel is made up of people who have a personal or professional connection with fostering. These include foster carers, social workers, adult care leavers, councillors and health care workers.

The panel will make a recommendation about whether you should be approved as a foster carer. The panel will usually be in a position to advise you of their recommendation before it goes for a final decision by the Agency Decision Maker.

In the unusual circumstance you are not approved as a foster carer, your assessing social worker will explain the reasons for this decision. If you are unhappy with the outcome you will receive information on how to appeal.

Step 5

Once you are approved as a foster carer, your supervising social worker will discuss with you children and young people who would benefit from a placement with you and your family. Your induction process will begin and you will become part of our extensive Fostering Community.

Your approval as a foster carer is reviewed at least annually, along with your professional development.

For more information:

Please contact the Angie Lama, Supervising Social Worker on 01904 555678. Adoptive families are needed as well as foster families. We provide separate information for anyone who is interested in adoption.



Questions and Answers

How old must I be?

We recommend that foster carers are at least 21 years of age but there is no upper age limit for fostering in York and your individual circumstances will be considered.

We do ask that younger foster carers are emotionally mature and have experience of being around children and that all foster carers are fit, healthy and active to cope with the pressures of becoming a foster carer.

Do I have to be married or in partnership?

No, we welcome foster carers who are single and divorced as well as married couples or those in a civil partnership.

Can I foster if I am gay, lesbian or bisexual?

Yes, we welcome single, gay or lesbian and same sex couples.

Do I need a family of my own?

Many carers are parents with children of their own, whether they are still at home or have grown up and left. However, it is not a necessity and many people who have not had children have become successful foster carers.

I am from a minority ethnic group.

We are keen to encourage applications from all communities. All we ask is that you can communicate in English.

I have an illness / disability

This does not automatically prevent you from fostering and each case will be considered on an individual basis.

Will I receive any financial support for the child?

All foster carers receive an allowance to cover the expenses of any extra child in the home. Details about different allowances are on the accompanying sheets.

I have a criminal record

Certain minor offences or cautions may not prevent you from becoming a foster carer, however you must let us know of any convictions or cautions that you have, no matter how long ago they occurred.

When you apply to become a foster carer, you agree to the council contacting the Disclosure and Barring Service for your complete history of offences and cautions.

If you haven't provided this information from the start we will be unable to proceed with your application.

There are certain offences which would preclude someone from becoming a foster carer.

These include any offence of causing harm to a child, serious offences of violence and sex offences.

I want to foster but my family are not keen

It is important that your whole family is committed to fostering. We assess families rather than individuals and everyone must be enthusiastic about their role in a foster child or young person's life.

If your children or partner really do not wish to foster, then fostering will not be right for you.

Do I have to live in York?

You don't have to live in York to foster for City of York Council, as long as you are able to travel for training and support groups, etc. Usually a child or young person needs to be in regular contact with their parents and friends, and living in or near York would be an advantage.

If you have any particular queries about any of the information contained in this booklet please ring Angie Lama, Supervising Social Worker to discuss on 01904 555678.



