Becoming a foster carer:

Frequently asked questions

www.fosteringfoundation.co.uk
Fostering: Frequently Asked Questions

I don’t have a spare room – can I foster?
We require you to have a spare bedroom, to ensure the child that you foster has the privacy and space they require.

Can I foster if I rent my own home?
You can be a foster carer if you rent your home or if you’re a home owner, but being able to provide a home environment that you expect to remain in, in the immediate future, is important, especially for a child who will have already moved home to be placed in your care.

What is the minimum age for becoming a foster carer?
We will assess applicants over the age of 21 but there is no upper age limit.

Can I foster if I'm single?
Yes, whether you are single, married, divorced or a single parent we can offer you the support to foster.

How long does it take to become a foster carer?
You will need to go through an assessment with a social worker which usually takes 4-6 months, this is dependent upon your availability to undertake the assessment.

Do I need specific qualifications to foster?
No. You will receive training to help you and your family identify and build upon the skills you already have, and develop new skills needed to foster. Once approved you will be expected to undertake ongoing training such as First Aid, and Child Protection.

Can I foster if I have a long-term health condition?
Your health will be considered when applying to foster and any long-term conditions are taken into account. The most important factor is whether you are physically and psychologically fit enough to cope with the demands of caring for a child.

I am in a same-sex couple – can I foster?
Your sexual orientation will not affect your application to foster with us.

Will a police record stop me from fostering?
Not necessarily. The law states that the only criminal convictions that prevent people from fostering are those that relate to an offence against children or a sexual offence. Minor offences should not count against you in your application to foster.
Fostering: Frequently Asked Questions cont

Must I have had my own birth children?
No, you do not need to have had your own birth children in order to foster. Through the assessment process we look at people’s ability and potential, as well as how they can build upon skills they may already have.

Can I become a foster carer if one of my own children has disabilities?
You can apply to become a foster carer if one of your children has a disability. We will want to discuss with you how you would balance the needs of any children who are placed with you with those of your own child and what the impact of having other children in their home could be on your own child.

How will fostering affect my children?
Fostering involves the whole family. It can be tough for children who find themselves sharing their parents with children who have led very different lives. However, many children also say that they have enjoyed their parents’ fostering and learnt a lot from it. We offer regular support groups/activity days for the sons and daughters of our foster carers.

What support is available?
You will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who will support you and meet with you regularly; this will typically be the social worker who undertakes your fostering assessments. We also have support workers and access to 24 hour 365 days emergency support. You will also have the support of your fellow foster carers.

I have recently suffered bereavement can I foster?
If you have recently suffered significant loss i.e. miscarriage or death of a close family member, we advise you to wait for a period of time before proceeding with fostering – we can discuss this with you and help you to decide when the time is right.

If I or someone in my house smokes can I still foster?
We will take into account the impact on the health of any children that will be placed with you and also the importance of foster carers as role models for young people in care. This may mean prospective foster carers who smoke are given support to stop smoking or are unlikely to be able to foster certain groups such as children under five and those with certain health conditions. All foster carers should provide a smoke-free environment for children.
Do I have to be able to drive?
A driving licence is preferred but is not essential. As a foster carer there may be quite a bit of travelling to contact, appointments, and attending meetings.

I have suffered from depression in the past; will that prevent me from fostering?
Past mental illness does not exclude you from becoming a foster carer but you would need to discuss this with us. We always ask for a medical report as part of the assessment process. You will need to be mindful that fostering can be emotionally demanding and whether this will impact on your past illness.

Will I get paid?
We pay a generous weekly allowance; an example of the basic weekly allowance is between £350 - £410 for one child. This depends on the needs of the child. The fostering allowance that takes into account the costs of living with a foster child. These can include food, household bills and everyday living. We don't advise you how to spend your fostering allowance; this is for you to decide based on the needs of the looked after child and your family.

Do foster carers pay tax and national insurance?
When you foster with us, you’ll be classed as self-employed. This means you’ll be entitled to tax relief on your fostering income and you’ll pay very little, or no, tax and national insurance. The tax relief you’ll receive depends on your financial circumstances and you’ll still need to complete a tax return. You’ll still be able to claim Child Tax Credit for your own children. You’ll also still be eligible for National Insurance Credits, which count towards your basic state pension. Depending on your circumstances, you may also be eligible for Working Tax Credit. The HMRC provides up to date information on tax and national insurance for foster carers.
https://www.gov.uk/

How will fostering impact on my welfare benefits?
If you currently claim welfare benefits you are likely to be able to continue to claim while fostering.

I have pets, does that affect whether I can foster?
Having pets does not prevent you from fostering, and they can in fact be an asset to a foster family. Every animal is different and your pets will be assessed as part of the process of becoming a foster carer, taking into account factors such as their temperament and behaviour.
**Fostering: Frequently Asked Questions cont**

**We are a religious family; will this affect our application to foster?**
It does not matter what your religion is and this should not affect your application to foster. Children should be placed with foster families that can meet their needs, including religious needs. However, you would need to consider how you would feel about discussing issues such as alternative religious beliefs or sexuality with a child.

**How long will I have to wait for my first placement?**
The time in between getting approved and having your first placement will vary from person to person. You can begin taking placements right away, but we’ll always try and match you with the best possible placement based on your assessment and approval. Of course you will be involved in making decisions about who comes to live with you – it is so important to get this right.

**Can I choose how long I want a child or young person to stay with me?**
During the assessment process, we’ll sit down with you to discuss what types of fostering will suit you best, such as respite, short-term, long-term, parent and child assessment or bridging placement. It isn’t always possible to know exactly how long a child will stay with you, but we’ll keep you updated as much as we can.

**Will I have a say in who I foster?**
As part of the assessment to become a foster carer, you will have discussions about the appropriate age range, the number of children you will be approved to foster, and any other considerations. Ideally, all placements will be well-matched and planned, but ultimately a foster carer has the right to turn down possible placements.

**How much will I know about the child or young person before the placement starts?**
We try to give you as much information as we can when we discuss a potential placement with you. All the information we have is provided by the local authority, and we’ll try and find out as much as possible to help you decide whether to accept a placement or not.

**Will I be able to meet the child before the placement begins?**
When planning placements, we always try to arrange for our carers to meet the child or children they’ll be caring for. However, this isn’t always possible, especially if a child is placed in an emergency. When this
Fostering: Frequently Asked Questions cont

happens, we'll try to give you as much information as we can when we discuss the potential placement with you.

**What if we don’t get on with the children?**
It is inevitable that, as foster carers, there will be some children who you find fit in better with your family. Some children will also take time to adjust to living in your home. However, if there is a real problem with a child, then it is important to discuss this with your Supervising Social Worker. You may find if things are not working out for you, then the child will also be feeling that this is not the right place for them. It may be that with extra support or training, caring for that child or young person becomes easier and more enjoyable. However, sometimes, it may be best for a child to move to another foster family.

**Who is responsible for taking foster children to school or the doctors?**
As a foster carer, you have responsibility for these day-to-day tasks; the school run and doctor’s trips included. Should you have a problem on an odd occasion, your supervising social worker can help you make alternative arrangements.

**What is the difference between adoption and fostering?**
Fostering is a way of offering children and young people a home while their own family is unable to look after them. It can be a temporary arrangement and some fostered children return to the own families. Those children that cannot return to their families often live in long-term foster care and have continued support from the local authority or health and social care trust. These young people may continue to have contact with their families. Foster carer never have parental responsibility for a child that they care for. The Fostering foundation specialises in long term and permanent placements as this is what the majority of our looked after children prefer.

Adoption is a way of providing a new family for children who cannot be brought up by their own parents. It is a legal procedure and all parental responsibility is transferred to the adopters. An adopted child loses all legal ties with their birth parents.

**What if I’m already a foster carer and wish to transfer?**
Transferring to us is easier than you may think. We'll support you every step of the way and work with you, your existing agency and local authority to minimise the impact on any foster children currently in your care. As you will have already been approved as a foster carer the assessment process is much shorter.
“It's the best job in the world” Foster Carer C

If you have any questions about fostering with The Fostering Foundation contact our friendly staff on 03300102045 or email us at info@fosteringfoundation.co.uk.
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