

Fostering how it works



“We’ve been fostering for six years. It’s rewarding seeing changes in the children but it’s always hard letting them go.”

fostering becoming a foster carer

Becoming a foster carer doesn't happen overnight. Once you have submitted a registration form, it takes between six and nine months before you can become a foster carer.

This period of time will help you to decide whether fostering is right for you and give you time to think about the scheme that would be the most suitable for you.

The Process

1. Information evening

When you have read this information pack, you need to come to one of the information meetings held monthly - dates in the letter with this pack. You will be able to talk to a social worker about your interest in fostering and ask any questions. The social worker will want to see if you meet our eligibility criteria and if it seems you meet the requirements we will give you a registration form.

2. Registration of Interest

You send in your completed registration form.

3. Initial Visit

Following receipt of your application we will contact you to arrange a home visit. You will be invited to discuss your application and will receive further information about what fostering involves. You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions.

4. References

We will approach the local Health Authority, Children Services, Services, NSPCC, and the Criminal Records Bureau to check that they don't hold any records that might count against you. We'll also ask you for the names of two people who know you well and who will give you personal references.

5. Medical

You will be sent for a medical check-up with your own doctor.

6. Preparation

You will be invited to a series of preparation and training groups with other prospective carers. You will also have the chance to meet experienced carers and find out what fostering is really like!

7. Home visits

A social worker from the Adoption & Fostering Unit will visit you at your home on a number of occasions to complete a report with you and your children, if you have any.

8. Fostering Panel

The report will then be presented to the Fostering Panel, which you will be invited to attend to participate in the panel discussions. The panel will then make a recommendation in relation to your application/approval.

9. Approval

If approved, we will place a child with you... then the real work begins.

10. Post approval

Once approved there are regular training courses and support opportunities to assist you in caring for children and young people. You will also have a supervising social worker who will act as a support person to help you care for the foster children you foster.

fostering questions answered



“There is a great satisfaction in seeing a teenager develop into a responsible adult.”

fostering questions answered

The things we are most often asked

Do I need any special qualifications to foster?

No, we will help and prepare you to understand the issues that you will face as a foster carer. We also offer support and advice once you are approved. We are looking for people from a variety of backgrounds and experience who have a common interest and commitment to helping young people. You will need to enjoy the challenges of looking after children and it will certainly help if you have childcare experience and have qualities like patience and a sense of humour.

Do I need to have a particular type of accommodation?

No. You may own your own home, rent from the council or rent privately. What is more important is that you can provide enough space to accommodate a child or children in your home, in most cases this will require you to have a spare bedroom. Babies may sleep in a cot in the foster carers' room but will need a room of their own at 12 months.

Are there any restrictions?

We would need to consider your individual circumstances and the type of fostering you are interested in doing, along with the ages of any children you would be caring for. We also need to ensure that your health enables you to meet the needs of the child. If you wish to care for children under 2 years we do not usually approve people who smoke. You (and your partner) and all members of the household must have been in the UK for 5 years in order for us to be able to carry out the relevant local authority and police checks. The youngest member of your family must be at least 12 months when applying for fostering.

Who and what are we looking for?

We welcome people from a variety of different backgrounds, experiences and circumstances. We need people who are able to offer a genuine commitment to children and young people for shorter or more permanent periods of foster care.

We welcome interest from people regardless of race, religion, gender, class, sexuality or disability. You may be married, single, living with a partner, divorced, widowed, in employment or unemployed. As many of the children are from dual heritage backgrounds, we particularly welcome applications from African-Caribbean, Asian and dual heritage individuals and couples. The important thing is that you meet the needs of the child placed with you. In order to assess the permanence of the relationship, it is unlikely Bradford will consider an application from couples who have been together for less than two years.

What do I do if I find fostering is not for me?

If at any stage of the fostering process you feel that you no longer want to continue with your application, we hope that you will discuss this with us. We also sometimes have to advise applicants that being a foster carer would not be suitable for them.

fostering are you suitable?



**“Fostering
has fulfilled our
dream of having
more children to
care for.”**

Fostering - Ordinary people doing something special

fostering are you suitable?

Whilst you may be enthusiastic and committed to becoming a foster carer, you also need to be realistic about what you can offer.

To help you decide, ask yourself the questions below.

Emotional questions

- Are you prepared for a big change in your life?
- What personal qualities do you have? Fostering demands flexibility, patience, resourcefulness and a sense of humour!
- If you're in a relationship, are you both equally committed to fostering?
- Is this the right time in your life to take on fostering as a commitment?

Practical questions

- Could you change your household routine to suit the needs of a foster child?
- Have you enough space, particularly bedroom space?
- Do you have children of your own? If so, would they be happy to share their space, friends, family etc?
- If you work, what hours do you work? How would this fit in with the needs of children and young people?

If you're still unsure the Adoption & Fostering Unit team are at hand to give advice and discuss your application with you.

A collage of six people: a man in a yellow shirt, a woman, a teenage boy in a red and white jacket, a young girl with blonde hair, a young boy in a blue shirt, and a young girl with long brown hair. They are all smiling or looking thoughtfully at the camera.

fostering choices available

“My wife and I have been fostering for years, from young children to teenagers. We’ve found it so rewarding.”

Fostering - Ordinary people doing something special

fostering choices available

There are a number of different fostering schemes, reflecting the variety of backgrounds and needs of individual children. Whatever your situation, there will be a scheme to match the type of help that you can offer.

Short-term fostering, called 'link carers'

As a link carer you will look after children whose long-term future is uncertain. Children usually return to their own families, but can need an alternative home for either a night or a few years, while social workers and sometimes the courts decide if they can return home. If a child cannot live with their own family, link carers provide a valuable bridge to a child either moving to a long-term placement or an adoptive family. For older children or teenagers they may need a short placement to give both them and their family breathing space.

Long-term/Permanent fostering

If it has been decided that a child cannot return home, your role as a long-term foster carer is to be a substitute family for the rest of their childhood. Usually it is children aged from six years upwards who need long-term foster families. Many will want to keep in touch with members of their family and wherever possible we try to keep brothers and sisters together.

Respite care

Respite carers provide temporary breaks to existing carers by looking after their children for one or two weekends a month or for a short holiday break. We are happy to talk about what you feel you can offer. You will still need to be approved and have a spare bedroom.

Specialist Scheme

There are some children and young people, usually aged 6-16, who may have experienced a breakdown of their fostering or residential placement, who present more challenging behaviour. Carers require more specialist skills if they are to be able to offer the children the help they need and be able to stick with them through some difficult times. Often they need to be the only foster child in placement.

Fostering challenge

Fostering challenge carers are people from a variety of backgrounds and who have experience caring for children and young people who display challenging behaviour. Carers are expected to look after one child or young person usually aged 10 -16 years (some may be younger). This scheme pays a higher fee as well as offering additional support and training, as the needs of these young people are more complex.

Safe Home


Safe home carers need to have experience of managing young people with difficult behaviour and have an interest in protecting young people from sexual exploitation. Carers are expected to look after one child or young person, usually aged 11-16 years old, who is thought to lie on the fringe of 'third party abuse'. This scheme pays a higher fee as well as offering additional support and training. This particular scheme has been developed in partnership with Barnardo's Turnaround Project, who will offer additional support and guidance to these foster placements.

Children with Disabilities

We have a number of children with disabilities and complex health needs who require respite or permanent placement.

Whichever fostering scheme you choose, all involve working as part of a team, with the child's social worker, your own Adoption & Fostering Unit social worker and other people who will help to meet the child's needs.

fostering a genuine need

A man and a young girl are sitting together, reading a book. The man is on the left, wearing a light-colored, patterned button-down shirt. The girl is on the right, wearing a blue and white striped shirt. They are both looking at the book, which is open in the girl's hands. The background shows a bookshelf filled with books.

“I have always wanted to become a foster carer and to offer help and support to people in care.”

Fostering - Ordinary people doing something special

fostering a genuine need

We are looking for people who will make a commitment to school-aged children and young people who desperately need long-term foster carers. We particularly need people who want to care for children aged 10+.

We are also looking for African Caribbean and Asian carers and people who have similar racial and cultural backgrounds to the children we are currently looking after (African Caribbean/white, Asian/white).

What next?

Talk the whole thing over, not just with your partner and children, if you are part of a family, but also with your parents and other relatives. You need to know their reaction to the idea of fostering.

If you think you have what it takes to become a foster carer, we hope that you will follow up your enquiry. If you would like any further information, our service advisors will be happy to help.

Phone us on: 01274 434331

If after reading this information pack, you have decided that fostering is not right for you at this time, may we thank you for your interest.

Please pass this information onto a friend, neighbour or relative. They could be interested in finding out more about fostering services in the Bradford district.

fostering and you



“As a short term carer that means I sometimes get children at very short notice. I’m coping with a forever changing household.”

fostering and you

Fostering is doing something for others. In return you face a challenge which can be very rewarding.

Why do children need carers?

Family problems sometimes make it impossible for children to continue living with their parents or other close relatives. When this happens, Social Services may have to take over parental responsibility and arrange for children to live with a foster carer. This is usually a temporary arrangement, although some foster placements become more permanent.

Could you become a foster carer?

There are many children and young people in Bradford and the surrounding area that need the sort of help that you may be able to give.

The children that need your help are not ordinary children. In their short lives they may have faced many great problems and trauma. They may have been neglected or abused; they may have received little love or affection. As a result, you will need to be prepared for and able to cope with difficult behaviour. You will need to be patient and give love, affection and understanding to help a distressed and troubled child settle down. But in time, you should have the reward of watching them grow and develop into happy, confident young people.

Wherever possible, we work to get children back home with their families. As a foster carer you will play an important part in keeping children in touch with their families - by phone, letter and meeting with them. Often parents will need your encouragement and support to help them rebuild their relationship with their children.

As a foster carer, you will not be left to face the challenge alone. You will receive lots of help and support from social workers, you will have the chance to meet other foster families and we will provide you with all the necessary training.

Fostering could be your next career move...

Being a foster carer can be the start of a new rewarding career. You will be expected to attend training to increase your skills and/or work towards obtaining an NVQ qualification.

fostering financial support



“I was surprised that being a single parent didn't prevent me from being a foster carer.”

fostering financial support

All foster carers receive allowances for the children placed with them

Allowances are paid to cover the general costs of looking after children, for example additional heating, lighting, food, spending money and clothing for the child. You will also be provided with money for children's birthdays, religious festivals and holidays. The allowance also depends on the age of the child. To assist you in caring for children, we will also provide essential equipment such as beds, bedding, wardrobes, other furniture, and some safety equipment.

Standard weekly allowance

Age of child/young person	Weekly boarding out	Additional grants paid at appropriate times
0-4	£114.87	2 weeks holiday
5-10	£130.85	1 week religious festival
11-15	£162.89	1 week birthday
16-17	£198.11	

Fees

If you are coming forward to foster a child not known to you, you will be paid a fee. The amount depends on the type of fostering you provide.

We also reward professional carers by the payment of fees and this is dependent on the type of fostering and age of the child.

Level	1 child	2 children	3 children
Level 1	£120	£180	£240
Level 2	£170	£255	£340
Level 3	£242	£363	£484
Specialist	£390 (single placements)		

New carers start at level 1. After attending several training courses and an annual review, you may progress to level 2. The process then repeats and you can move to level 3.