



Foster Care information

Why do children and young people need foster care?

Children and young people may need foster care for a variety of reasons when they are not able to remain at home with their birth families.

Who are the children and young people who need carers?

Children from birth to 18. Single children or brothers and sisters who need to be together. Children who may have had difficult or upsetting experiences. Children who need extra care, support and guidance because they have not always received the care and attention they needed. Children from various religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

What skills do I need to be a foster carer?

A genuine interest in the well-being of children. Experience of caring for children, even if you are not a parent. You will need:

- Common sense
- Time and energy
- A sense of humour
- Patience
- Commitment
- Tolerance
- Space in your home
- Flexibility

Who can be a carer?

A married or unmarried couple or a single person. Working, unemployed or retired. With or without children at home or elsewhere. A home owner or living in rented accommodation. From any cultural, religious or ethnic background.

What type of care do children and young people need?

Emergency Care: There are times when children need to be cared for with very little notice, for example when a parent is admitted to hospital, or if a child needs to be protected from harm.

Temporary: Children and young people will be placed with a carer until such time that the situation at home is resolved, and return to their parents. The children or young people will usually be having a high level of contact with their parents.

Permanent: Children and young people are placed with permanent carers when, for a variety of reasons, they are unable to return to their birth family. In this situation, whilst children may not be able to return home, they may continue to have ongoing contact with their parents.

Respite: This involves having children to stay, usually for weekend breaks, or sometimes a little longer. This allows a family or child to have regular breaks, or a full time carer to spend time with their own family.

Shared care: This gives the opportunity for children who may have physical or learning difficulties, and their families, regular short breaks. Shared Care offers this support in the form of overnight or weekend stays, or even holidays on a regular basis.

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Experience of an East Dunbartonshire Foster Carer - Susan

"When you become a foster carer you are fully aware that everything you are doing is for the benefit of the child," said Susan. "This means caring and nurturing them and ultimately treating them like part of your own family until their birth parents are in better situation to look after them.

"When children arrive they are often traumatised by their home lives so it is important that I take the time to welcome them into my home and reassure them.

"Some children may have low self-esteem and often believe the situation is their own fault. It's my job to give the children care and stability in their lives and to support them through school until the time is right for them to leave my care.

"The children are often frightened and frustrated, and their behaviour might reflect this, but you need to treat them respectfully so that they feel wanted and valued.

"Foster care is hard work. You have got to have a lot of patience, a good sense of humour and plenty of time to spare, as there are numerous meetings and appointments such as with health and education in addition to social work meetings to attend. My husband's great at the humour and I get to do all the organising!

"My husband and I decided to become foster carers when our two children left home and we had more spare time. We discussed it for a long time and decided that it was right for us. It's nice to have the children around the house and care for them as they grow up as part of our family.

"To see them settle into a new way of life and witness their confidence and self-esteem increase is wonderful."

What support will I receive after a child is placed?

You will receive regular support by your own supervising Social Worker. There will also be the opportunity to be involved in training and support groups, which are valued by the current foster carer group. You will also receive information, advice and support from the child's own social worker. Access to support from specialists is available to advise and support on how best to respond to a child or young person's individual needs. A fee and allowance will be paid to you to cover the cost of caring. Allowances for children are based on their age as follows;

0-4 years £128.22 per week, 5-10 years £146.05 per week, 11-15 years £181.81 per week, 16+ years £221.13 per week.

What happens next?

After you get in touch by phone, mail or e-mail or the on-line contact form, we will be pleased to talk with you about becoming a carer and whether this is right for you and your family. A home visit with one of the supervising Social Workers can be arranged at a mutually convenient time, where you will have the opportunity to discuss becoming a carer in more detail. If everyone is in agreement, this will be followed by a foster carer preparation group with others who are interested in becoming carers, where you will be able to meet experienced carers and other members of the team.

You will be asked to complete an application form which asks for your permission for police, social work and health checks to be carried out to make sure you are suitable. The next stage is to start a detailed assessment of your personal circumstances and suitability as a carer, which will involve a series of visits from a supervising Social Worker. You will be asked to name referees, including an employer (if you are working), who can comment on your suitability to care for children.

The assessment report, the content of which will be discussed with you, will be presented to East Dunbartonshire Council's Fostering Panel, which you will be invited to attend. The Panel will make a recommendation about whether you should be approved as a carer.

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