

0800 001 6166



Fostering Information Guide

Fostering Explained: A Guide for Prospective and New Carers



What is Fostering?

Fostering is a way of providing a safe, stable, and nurturing environment for children and young people who cannot live with their birth families. It is often a temporary arrangement where trained foster carers look after children, helping them through difficult times and meeting their emotional, educational, and developmental needs. Foster care can range from short-term placements lasting a few days to long-term care that provides a child with stability over several years and sometimes until they are an adult. Foster carers play a vital role in offering support, guidance, and a sense of belonging, helping children to thrive and reach their potential. It's a real opportunity to **be the difference!**



Why do children come into foster care?

Children are removed from their homes only when their safety is at risk or when circumstances prevent their birth family from providing appropriate care. While neglect and abuse are among the most common reasons children enter foster care, there are various other factors that may lead to the need for fostering. These can include parental illness or incapacity, family breakdown, domestic violence, or substance misuse. In some cases, children may come into care due to being unaccompanied asylum seekers or because their primary carers have passed away. Foster care ensures these children live in safety.



Types of Abuse

Physical:

Physical abuse is often easier to identify than other types of abuse, particularly when a child attends school or interacts regularly with people outside their home. Signs may include recurring injuries that lack a reasonable explanation, such as frequent bruises, welts, sores, or even fractures. In such cases, removing the child from their birth family is sometimes the only way to ensure their safety and protect them from further harm.

Sexual:

Tragically, children who experience sexual abuse are often manipulated into keeping it a secret or misled into thinking such behaviour is normal, which can make it less likely to be reported. When a child is identified as a victim of sexual abuse, it is crucial to place them in a safe and secure environment to protect them from further harm and begin their recovery.



Emotional:

Emotional abuse can be harder to recognise than physical abuse, and many children may not even realize they are being mistreated. Behaviours such as humiliation, manipulation, and intentionally frightening a child are all forms of emotional abuse that can result in the child being removed from their home and placed with a foster family for their protection.

Understanding Neglect

Emotional:

Many children in care have experienced emotional neglect, where their parents have failed to provide the love and affection necessary for their healthy growth and development. Feeling loved and cared for is essential for children, as it helps them build trust and form positive relationships later in life. Children who have suffered emotional neglect may struggle with attachment issues, so it is crucial to place them in a loving, supportive foster family to ensure they receive the care they need.



Health:

This involved medical neglect which occurs when a parent fails to provide or seek proper medical care for their child. This can involve not treating physical injuries, neglecting to address mental health conditions, or intentionally delaying medical attention when the child is sick, putting their well-being at further risk.



Physical:

This occurs when a child's primary carers fail to meet basic needs, such as providing shelter, food, and clothing. It may also involve living conditions that are unsafe or harmful to the child's health, or the child being left alone for extended periods. Denying a child essential necessities like food, clothing, or safe living conditions can lead to serious health problems. Therefore, it is crucial for the child to receive proper care and support in a loving foster home.



Educational:

Educational is vital for all children. Educational neglect occurs when a parent allows their child to skip school or actively discourages attendance. If this behaviour persists over time, it may be recommended that the child be placed in a supportive foster family, where they can receive the necessary support to access a good education.



Some other reasons...

Crisis in the family:

The loss of a family member, financial challenges, or eviction from the home can result in a child needing temporary foster care while longer-term solutions are arranged to ensure the children will be safe and have their needs met.

Breakdown in the family:

Children may be placed into foster care after witnessing domestic violence or being involved in conflicts within the home, such as disputes between parents, children, siblings, or even wider family.

Illness in the family:

At times, parents may not be able to care for a child due to their own illness or disability, or they may be unable to meet the care needs of a sick or disabled child and require support and intervention whilst the child is looked after.

Loss of a parent:

If a child's primary caregiver passes away, they may be placed into foster care if they are unable to live with relatives or if the remaining household members, or wider family cannot provide the necessary care the child needs.



Fostering in England

3 IN 4
CHILDREN
IN CARE LIVE
IN FOSTER
FAMILIES

Children in the care system can be supported in various settings. Local authorities (LAs) are responsible for finding appropriate homes for children entering care, which may include foster homes, adoptive homes, or children's residential care homes. Additionally, young people in care may also live in hostels, mother and baby units, residential schools, or young offenders' institutions. Foster carer is often seen as the best option if children cannot remain with their family due to providing a loving home environment that is key for children.

As an independent fostering agency (IFA), we collaborate with local authorities (LAs) to find suitable foster families for children who cannot be placed with their own approved carers. However, some children, due to their complex trauma, are more challenging to place. As a result, they may remain in residential care homes, where they lack the stability and support of a family unit.

Around 30,000 children enter the care system each year. England is currently short of foster carers, with a shortfall of around 6,500 foster families. This highlights the ongoing need for individuals who are ready to open their homes and hearts to children, offering them the stability and love they deserve in a family environment.

Key Statistics across the UK



The number of children in care is continuing to rise each year. Over 100,000 children were in the care system in the UK according to a recent study.

A recent study found that nearly 70,000 children live with over 53,000 foster families across the UK.

Around 38,000 more children come into care over the course of 12 months, that is one child every 15 minutes who could need a foster family.

Every year thousands of new foster families are needed.

Types of Fostering

Impact Fostering will offer a variety of placements for children and young people between the ages of 0 - until a child turns 18 years old with foster carers. These include:



Emergency:

Impact Fostering will provide a 24-hour service with foster carers who have the ability and drive to accept emergency, unplanned placements for individual children or sibling groups.

Respite:

Respite placements usually offer support for short periods allowing foster carers to have a break from caring such as holidays, family issues, significant family events, bereavement, health issues and so on.

Short-term, Bridging and Transition:

These types of placements could be anything from a few days, to weeks, months or sometimes even years whilst plans are made regarding the future of a child with the local authority and other professionals. This could include assessment placements which allow for the allocated social worker to complete an assessment of birth parents, bridging placements which prepare a child for a move such as reunification with family, long term fostering, semi-independence/independent living, adoption, or other permanent options.

Transition placements help a child move from residential placement settings to a family environment which may mean remaining in foster care. Foster carers must have relevant experience, skills, confidence, and knowledge to form positive bonds with children and meet their specific needs.

Long Term Permanent:

The long-term plan for some children is to remain in foster care until the age of 18 years old. If the child is (or becomes) established and comfortable with a specific fostering family, an arrangement may be reached for the child to continue residing with the same fostering family until the age of 18 or beyond. The benefit for the child/ren in permanent placements lies in the stability it provides, fostering the development of a strong attachment between the foster carer and the child.

Sibling groups:

Certain foster carers have the capacity to provide care for groups of siblings, ensuring that children can remain together. At Impact Fostering, maintaining the unity of siblings is a priority whenever feasible. Recognising that these children have already experienced significant losses, it is crucial for us to strive to preserve any enduring relationships that may prove beneficial to them. Fostering placements that accommodate siblings are equipped with the necessary space, time, and energy to address the needs of all the children under their care.

Parent and child:

Parent and child placements are needed for parents encountering challenges in caring for their children. Foster carers play a crucial role in aiding local authorities in their assessments by offering insights into the parent's capacity to care for their child safely. Parent and child foster carers are tasked with supporting the parent in care to enhance their parenting skills, with the ultimate goal being that the parent gains the skills and confidence to independently care for their child. Such placements are exclusively extended to experienced foster carers who have undergone training specifically tailored for parent and child placements. Qualified staff from Impact Fostering can also prepare court reports and statements if required.

Remand:

Remand placements are needed when a child is awaiting a court date, and the courts have mandated the local authority to arrange a suitable home environment for the child during this period. Remand foster carers play a crucial role by providing heightened supervision, establishing strong and appropriate boundaries, and actively participating in regular meetings and discussions. Children placed on remand typically exhibit their best behaviour, as a failure in the remand placement could lead to spending this time in a prison setting. The provision of this type of placement is restricted to experienced foster carers who have undergone specific training for remand placements.

Complex needs:

Foster carers who express willingness and have the capability, offer placements for children facing the risk of sexual exploitation, trafficking, and/or exhibiting harmful sexualized behaviours, or presenting other complex needs. Impact

Fostering provides specialised training and supervision to foster carers who care for children with complex needs.

Solo:

Foster carers who are willing and capable offer solo placements to children who pose a potential risk to other children or themselves, or whose behaviour is exceptionally challenging to the extent that foster carers cannot provide sufficient support if other children are present. Solo placements are exclusively offered to experienced foster carers with relevant skills and knowledge.

Children with disabilities:

Impact Fostering endeavours to provide a variety of services for children with disabilities, encompassing long-term, short-term, short break, and emergency placements. Impact Fostering identifies foster carers possessing the requisite skills and experience to address this specific needs of the child, and when necessary, provide additional training and wider support.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC):

Staff at Impact Fostering have extensive experience of working with UASC. UASC require the assistance of foster carers who are knowledgeable about, or willing to learn, the asylum application process and are able to meet the identity needs of children from diverse ethnicities and cultures, especially those for whom English is not their first language. Many unaccompanied children also require specialised support in recovering from intense war, difficult journeys, and other forms of trauma. Foster carers interested in supporting unaccompanied children are required to undergo the necessary training beforehand.

Staying Put:

Staying Put arrangements enable young people to continue residing in their foster placement beyond the age of 18, facilitating a smoother transition into adulthood. This arrangement can potentially extend until the age of 25. Impact Fostering actively promotes the establishment of enduring relationships between foster carers and the children in our care whenever feasible.

Who can become a foster carer?

You can become a foster carer if you are:

- Aged 21 years old or over
- Are passionate about caring for children
- Have at least one spare bedroom
- Have full-time UK residency or permission to remain in the UK



It's clear that all children in foster care have likely experienced some form of trauma due to their unstable home life. Even transitioning between different foster families can be distressing for children who long for stability and consistency. Trauma has a deep and lasting effect on a young person's brain, influencing their emotional, social, behavioural, and physiological development.

This can result in a variety of complex needs, such as anger, frustration, emotional withdrawal, hyperactivity, or an ongoing need for attention. This is why foster children require someone who is patient, nurturing, and committed to supporting them through their challenges. Regardless of your background, if you are single, married, divorced, or have no previous experience working with children, what truly matters is your dedication and commitment to making a positive impact on vulnerable children's lives.



What makes a great foster carer?

Patience

The ability to pause and reflect, rather than reacting immediately, is a vital skill for a great foster parent. Each child will adjust to their new environment in their own way, which may take time. Offering them the space they need to heal, while gently encouraging positive changes, will significantly contribute to transforming their lives for the better.



Resilience:

Many children in care have experienced abuse, neglect, or disruption, which can lead to challenging behaviours at school or at home. This demands patience and resilience. A great foster carer won't give up when things get tough—instead, they'll become even more committed to providing the support needed to help the child thrive.

A loving heart:

Above all, foster parents must have an abundance of love to offer. A deep passion for improving the lives of young people is essential, as the core of fostering is about making a lasting difference.

Showing empathy:

Having compassion is a crucial quality, as children in care need individuals who are willing to invest time in understanding the reasons behind their behaviour and becoming a positive force for change. When a child acts out, you'll look beyond the immediate behaviour and focus on uncovering the underlying cause.



Communication

Finding effective ways to communicate with a child to help them understand a situation is a key skill, especially when explaining why certain behaviours are not acceptable. This goes hand in hand with being a good listener. Listening to a child fosters trust, which in turn helps break down communication barriers.



Openness and acceptance:

Children in care come from diverse backgrounds, with various cultural, religious, and ethnic influences. Foster carers celebrate this diversity by ensuring their foster children can continue to participate in religious holidays and cultural traditions.



Fostering Assessment: Form F

When considering whether fostering is the right choice for you, there are some practical factors to consider. In addition to being over 21, having a spare bedroom, and having the legal right to live in the UK, we will also look at the following during your Form F Fostering assessment:

Health - children and young people can be energetic and demanding, so it's important that you're able to meet their needs. You can still foster if you have mental or physical health conditions, as long as you're not putting yourself at risk.

Home - your home needs to be safe, secure, and suitable for a child to live in.

Availability - fostering is a big commitment, similar to parenting, but it's possible to work alongside it if you can ensure your availability.

Support network - at Impact Fostering, you have a whole team of professionals supporting you around the clock. We also want to make sure that your friends and family are behind your decision to foster.

Financial stability & Employment - we offer a generous fostering allowance to all our dedicated foster carers, so it's essential that you can manage your finances to ensure the children's needs are met. Your work experience and skills also form a key part of the assessment process.

Personal background: Childhood experiences, family dynamics, significant relationships all help us understand you better and how you can help a foster child.

Motivation: we explore your reasons as to why you want to become a foster carer.

Criminal background check: Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check

References: Personal and professional references to verify information

Rewards of fostering



Becoming a foster parent is a remarkable opportunity to provide a child or young person with a fresh start. It takes great courage to embark on the fostering journey, but caring for a child is one of the most fulfilling and impactful things you can do. When you foster with us, you'll receive the guidance, training, and encouragement needed to make a real difference in a child's life.

Training and Skills

Fostering provides the chance to develop specialist skills, including safeguarding, emergency first aid, administering medication, home health and safety, and managing challenging behaviours. You will have access to hundreds of courses that can be completed online or face to face to suit your needs.

Reward and Fulfilment

Fostering challenges individuals to develop patience, empathy, and resilience. The experience of supporting a child through difficult times can lead to a profound sense of personal accomplishment and emotional growth. The children who come into our care have faced so much at such young ages; all they need is someone to believe in them. With your guidance, love, care, and support, you can help vulnerable children unlock their full potential—something far more meaningful than any ordinary job – its life changing!

Flexibility & Self-employment with tax relief

Fostering is a unique role –no rigid workweek. It offers adaptability, with each day bringing something new. Your home becomes your workplace, and your primary focus is providing every child in your care with the love and attention they deserve. As a foster carer, you become self-employed, making you your own boss. This role also comes with the benefit of substantial tax relief.

Competitive pay and access to benefits

We offer our foster carers competitive pay along with a range of benefits providing unique access to discounts, rewards and offers. While fostering is driven by the desire to make a difference in a child's life, we understand that financial stability is essential. Our generous fostering allowance reflects the important work foster carers do, ensuring they have the resources needed to provide a nurturing and supportive environment for the children in their care.

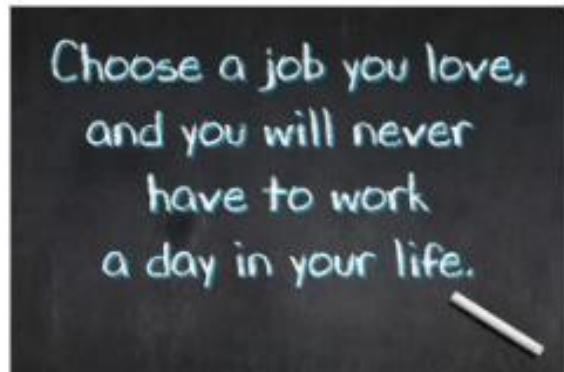
Foster Carer Pay

Offering a safe and secure family home is the greatest gift you can give a child. That's why foster parents are recognised for their dedication with competitive pay and additional financial rewards.

We pay a fostering allowance from £390 up to £700 per week depending on the individual child's need.

As a foster carer, you will be considered self-employed and receive a weekly payment for each child in your care. Impact Fostering have established links with experienced accountants who can support you with self-employment.

Don't let finances stand in the way of giving children and young people a happy, nurturing home. Our generous foster care pay is designed to ease financial concerns, allowing you to focus on what truly matters— creating meaningful family moments with the children in your care.



How do I become a foster carer?

We understand that deciding to become a foster carer requires a lot of thought and consideration, but when you choose to foster with us, you can count on our unwavering support every step of the way. The process usually takes 12-16 weeks. While it may seem like a lengthy process, it's essential to ensure you have all the information you need, a clear understanding of what to expect, and a full awareness of how fostering will impact your family. To make understanding the process easier please see below a helpful process map:



If you have any further questions about the process, get in touch and a friendly member of our team will be happy to help

Support provided by Impact Fostering

We believe that fostering requires a team effort - therefore you will never be alone when you start your journey with Impact

Fostering with 24/7 Support.
Our out of hours support is there for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.



Impact Fostering offers:

- Generous fostering allowance paid
- Allocated fostering social worker
- Networking with other foster carers & professionals
- Regular support groups, events and family days out
- Comprehensive training & support
- Exclusive member benefits with access to discounts and offers
- Membership to the Fostering Network for support, advice and guidance from fostering experts and professionals
- Access to therapeutic fostering resources
- Access to educational specialists for support and guidance
- Bespoke and individualised support

We are passionate and proud about the support that we offer our foster carers and feel like this is what makes our service unique. We have a genuine motivation to make a difference in the lives of children, and we know that foster carers are key to this. Making foster carers feel valued is a key part of Impact Fostering's ethos.

Ready to be the difference?

Whether you're new to fostering or considering a transfer, we're here to answer any questions you may have.

Get in touch



0800 001 6166



info@impactfostering.co.uk



www.impactfostering.co.uk



St Paul's Centre
405B Belchers Lane
Birmingham
B9 5SA