



# My Family Fosters

## Child's Guide When Parents Are Thinking About Fostering

# Hi,

Your family is thinking about fostering a child, which is an exciting time. But it's also completely normal if you're feeling a bit unsure, have questions, or even feel a little nervous about what fostering means. That's okay – we're here to help you understand.



We're Impact Fostering, an independent fostering agency that supports families like yours to become amazing foster carers.

This booklet is just for you. It will help you understand what fostering is all about – from why some children need foster care to how you might be involved when a child comes to live with your family. We'll do our best to answer all your questions, and there are also some fun activities inside to help you learn even more.

**We hope you enjoy reading it – and we look forward to getting to know you!**

# Welcome to Fostering

## What is fostering?

Fostering is when a child goes to live with another family because they're unable to stay in their own home. This might be because their mum or dad is unwell and can't take care of them, or because things at home aren't safe for them to live there.



# Types of Fostering

Some children need care for just a short period, while others may need a foster family for a longer time – sometimes even several years. Here are the different types of fostering we offer at Impact Fostering:

**Short-term fostering** – this is when a child stays with you for a few days, weeks, or months. Sometimes, it can last up to years, depending on their situation.

**Long-term fostering** – this is when a child lives with you for a long-period, often staying until they turn 18, or in some cases, until they finish further education at 21.

**Respite fostering** – this is when you care for a child from another foster family for a few nights or sometimes a couple of weeks, giving their foster carers a short break.

**Emergency fostering** – this is when a child comes to stay with you at very short notice, usually because something urgent has happened at home. It often takes place late at night or early in the morning and may last for a night or two, or sometimes a little longer.



**Parent and child fostering** – this involves caring for a parent and their baby, toddler, or young child in your home for several weeks. During this time, you support the parent usually the mum, but sometimes the dad as they learn how to care for their child.

**Sibling fostering** – this is when two or more brothers and/or sisters come to live with you together.

**Teenage fostering** – this is when a young person aged 13 or over comes to live with you.

**Disability fostering** – this involves caring for a child with a learning or physical disability, where you will provide the additional support and specialised care they need.

**Asylum-seeking fostering** – this is when a child who has left their home country, often because of conflict, comes to live with you without their parents or family.



# Why Children Need Foster Homes

Sometimes, parents can't care for their children the way they need to, for a variety of reasons. When this happens, it may be safer and better for the child to live with a foster family who can provide the care and support they need.

Here are some of the reasons a child might come into foster care:

- They're not being properly fed, kept clean, or cared for.
- Their parents are struggling with addiction to illegal substances.
- They are being harmed by their parents or other family members.
- Their parents are unwell and unable to care for them.
- Their mum or dad has sadly passed away, and there's no other family who can look after them.

**Children in foster care have often experienced a lot of trauma. This can leave them feeling very upset, frightened, or angry, which might cause them to say or do things that seem unusual or out of character. What's important to remember is that it's not their fault. They need the understanding, love, and support of a foster family to help them cope with their emotions and move towards a happier life.**

# What Life is Like as a Foster Family

Being part of a foster family is a special and rewarding experience. You're helping to give a child in need a safe and caring home while they go through a tough time in their life. It's a bit different from being in an ordinary family, because you might have lots of different children come to stay, or you might care for the same child for a long time.



Your parents will be looking after another child as well as you – but that doesn't mean they love you any less. They're simply opening up their hearts and home to help children who need safety, support, and stability.

Fostering a child might mean that your home life changes a little. Most of all, you'll be sharing your space with another child who isn't part of your family by birth.

It might feel a bit strange at first, but having a foster sibling can be a really fun and meaningful experience. You'll be helping them feel welcome and part of the family – and together, you'll create special memories that could last a lifetime.

Your parents might introduce some new rules to help the foster child feel safe and settled. But don't worry – your thoughts and feelings matter too. You'll always have the chance to share how you feel, and anything you say will be listened to and taken seriously.

At Impact Fostering, we want you to feel positive and involved in your role as part of a foster family. So, if you ever have any worries or questions, make sure you talk to your family – they're there to support you too.



# Key Words You Should Know



## Fostering

Temporary care for children who can't live at home

## Support

At Impact Fostering, we offer lots of support to both our foster parents and the children of foster parents

## Therapeutic

Fostering in a therapeutic way helps children with complex needs, and teaches foster parents to understand the reasons behind certain behaviour

## Stability

Foster care provides kids in care with stability after they've experienced a lot of change

## Complex Needs

A child with complex needs may have behavioural challenges, learning difficulties or a disability that means they need specialist care

## Love

All children deserve to be loved and feel loved

**Care**  
All children need to be cared for by an adult who can give them what they need

**Allowances**  
Money your parents will get paid to look after a child and reward their hard work

**Family**  
All children deserve to experience the love and warmth from a strong family unit

**Training**  
All foster parents get excellent training to help them be the best at what they do

**Contact**  
This is when foster children visit or speak to their birth family while in foster care

**Nurture**  
The effects of trauma can last a long time, so foster parents need to nurture children to help them heal

**Trauma**  
The impact of a very distressing or disturbing experience

# The Part You Play in Helping a Foster Child

You might not realise it, but you'll have an important role in a foster child's life as part of a fostering family. Here are some of the ways you can help them feel happy and settled during their time with you:

## Help them settle in

Joining a new family can feel really scary, especially for a foster child who may not know what to expect. That's why it's so important to help them feel welcome and settled. You could show them around the house, share some of your favourite things, or play a game together – even small gestures can make a big difference.

## Help them experience a loving family

Sadly, many children in care haven't had the chance to experience what a loving family is really like. You can make a big difference by showing them what it means to be part of a caring family. Whether it's helping with homework, enjoying weekend activities together, or cooking and eating meals as a family, these moments help them feel included and loved.



# Thinking about empathy



This is a fun activity designed to help build empathy. Empathy means putting yourself in someone else's shoes and trying to understand how they feel and see things from their perspective.

What emotions do you think a child might experience when they arrive at a new foster home?

**Write down the emotions you think the child will feel in the box above.**

# The Rewards of Fostering

Fostering a child is a wonderful act of kindness. You're giving a child in need not only a safe home but also the love and support they need during a challenging time. Alongside this, fostering can bring many positive benefits for you too.

## Friendship

It's great to witness foster children being embraced by the children of foster carers. Even more meaningful are the close friendships that often form, which can endure for a lifetime.

## Empathy

Sharing your home with a child who has been through trauma can help you develop empathy. You'll learn to be more patient and caring, which can make your relationships with others stronger

## Learning to share

Sharing is a valuable skill that helps you make friends and build strong relationships. It's not only good for you but also plays a big role in helping foster children feel included and loved as part of the family.

## Meeting different people

If your parents choose to foster, you might welcome children from all sorts of backgrounds into your home. This experience can help you become more open-minded and accepting, teaching you to see differences as something positive rather than something to be afraid of.

## Greater Appreciation

Spending time with children who have had tougher experiences can help you value and appreciate your own life even more.

# You might also notice some changes

When a foster child becomes part of your home, there will be some changes to get used to. However, these changes are usually easy to adapt to. Here are a few you might notice:

- Knocking on bedroom and bathroom doors, and asking permission to go in to the foster child's bedroom
- Making sure you're always fully dressed or wearing a dressing gown
- Making sure sharp items are stored away and the home is safe

**Are there any other changes you feel you'd like to talk over with your parents? Write them in this bubble.**



# Sharing is kindness

You may be curious about what it's like to live with a foster child and what you might need to share. Mostly, this means sharing your parents' time, attention, and sometimes your belongings. When a new child arrives, your parents might be quite busy at first, but they will always make time for you. If you're worried that fostering might make you feel left out, it's important to talk to your parents about how you're feeling—they want to understand and support you.

You won't have to share your bedroom—this is against the rules. Your bedroom is your private space and will always be just for you. Every foster child is provided with their own bedroom so that everyone has a quiet place to unwind and feel safe.

At Impact Fostering, we do all we can to make sure the children of foster carers feel included and enjoy being part of a foster family.

You don't have to share any of your belongings if you don't want to, but it's worth remembering that many children in care have very little. It's kind to let them borrow toys, games, or clothes—always with permission. And if you want to use their things, you should ask them first as well.



# Looking Forward to Fostering

We hope you're feeling excited! Fostering is a big decision for your parents, but they can't make it without you. You're a vital part of the family, so make sure you share your thoughts and feelings—whether they're positive or not. Every feeling matters.

At Impact Fostering, you'll never be on your own. Your parents' supervising social worker (from Impact Fostering) is always there to support the whole family, and they're happy to chat with you whenever you need. We also organise plenty of family events and fun days out, where you can meet other young people whose family foster too. Your happiness matters just as much, so we do everything we can to help you feel positive and involved in fostering.

**We look forward to meeting you and welcoming you into the Impact Fostering family!**





Thank you for taking your time to use this resource. We hope you found it useful.

For further information visit  
[www.impactfostering.co.uk](http://www.impactfostering.co.uk)