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1. What is fostering?

Fostering is a way of offering children and young people a home while their own family is unable to look after them.

Children all vary in their needs, their age and their personalities. For most the aim is to return to their birth families as soon as possible. Newport needs people to open their homes and offer these children the warmth and security they need.

Please read on to find out if you could make a difference to a child or young person's life.

2. Why are children fostered?

Children need to be fostered for a variety of reasons and foster homes need to provide them with a secure and safe environment whilst they are unable to live with their birth families.

There are many reasons why children need to be separated from their birth families, including:

- breakdown in family relationships
- parents health issues including substance misuse
- the child or young person has experienced abuse, including neglect
- parents caring for a child with a disability requiring a break

3. Who are the children who need foster care?

The children and young people who need foster care have the same needs as all children. Their ages range from 0 - 18 years and just as you and I are unique in our personalities, so are they.

The children could be newborn babies or they could be teenagers. They need stability, guidance, warmth, affection, praise and safety to name but a few. They may also have specific needs in relation to health and disability. They need a warm, caring home and nurturing; in fact everything that any child should have.

However, they will also have other needs that relate to their past experiences and their current situation. They may have issues with food, discipline, boundaries, affection, or with relationships. They will miss their birth family no matter how negative that experience.

You could be a vital stepping stone for that child, a positive light in the dark, even if it is only for a short time.



4. Types of foster care.

Temporary/Short Term Fostering

Many children need a foster home whilst Social Services works with their birth family to return them home as soon as possible. This could be anything from an overnight stay to several months and often timescales can be difficult to predict. However, it is important to determine what is best for a child.

Permanent Fostering

Sometimes it is decided that it is in the child's best interest not to return to their home. Their parents may be unable or unwilling to make the changes necessary to meet their child's needs. However, the child may still have ongoing contact with their birth family during their stay in foster care.

Respite Care

Respite Care is a valuable service that can give parents either a one off break or regular overnight breaks from caring for their child. This can provide the family with valuable support and could enable them to remain together.

This service is not only a support for parents, but also, a chance for the child to build a positive relationship with an adult outside the home and have different experiences. Respite Care may also be provided to foster carers for children in their care.

Short Break Scheme

This service is specifically for children and young people with disabilities. It provides regular breaks for both the child and their families and also offers a child the opportunity to have different experiences with another family.

Supported Lodgings

This service offers young people aged 16 plus support and guidance to help prepare them for independence and adulthood. They may have little understanding of relationships, money, employment and have few social skills. They will need a positive adult role model.

5. Who can foster?

Two words... you can!

If you are willing to open your heart and your home to a child or young person and are able to provide them with the stability and support they need, then you can do it!

Children and young people have a whole variety of personalities, ages, likes and dislikes, cultures, family values and our foster carers should reflect all those unique experiences in order to meet the children's needs.

The children may be quiet, shy, boisterous, sporty, creative, loud or funny and you may be the same. Use your personality and your interests. You will need to be able to adapt and be flexible in your approach, caring for any child takes patience and constant re-evaluation. You will need to be able to work alongside professionals and family members.

You may be in your 20s or in your 60s, have your own children or not, be married or single, own a house or rent a flat.

6. How to become a foster carer.

You need to contact us, either in person, by phone, email, or by completing and returning the attached form.

A Fostering Officer will arrange to meet with you in your home; this is your chance to ask any questions you may have and will offer you and the Fostering Officer the opportunity to consider if fostering is right for you.

If everybody is in agreement, you will then be expected to attend a 'Skills to Foster' course. Your Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure (CRB), medicals and all other relevant checks will be made and you will be allocated a Fostering Officer who will work with you during home visits to carry out an assessment. This will then be presented to a fostering panel who will hopefully recommend your approval as a foster carer.

This may seem a long process; however, the children placed with foster carers are vulnerable and it is vital that foster carers can meet their needs. It is also important that everyone is confident that fostering is right for you and your family. You will be fully involved with the whole process with any concerns being discussed openly and honestly.



7. What training and support is available?

You will be expected to attend the 'Skills to Foster' Course prior to approval, which will give you an insight into the role of foster carers and some of the issues you may face.

The Skills to Foster Course is held over 6 evenings in a 2 week period and provides prospective foster carers the opportunity to explore a range of issues. You will also attend a 3 evening induction course on topics including health, education and child protection. Newport also runs a rolling yearly programme of training that will inform and assist you in your role as well as giving you a chance to learn from other foster carers. You will be expected to attend training as part of your responsibility in meeting the changing needs of children in your care. Sessions include first aid, safer caring, child development, health issues for teenagers, life story work, child protection and challenging behaviour.

Once approved, you will be allocated a Fostering Officer who will be able to support and guide you. You will also be offered the opportunity to meet with other foster carers in a group or a one-to-one setting.

8. What checks are required?

You will need a Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure (CRB) check, a medical, a Social Services record check, NSPCC, CSSIW, education (where there are school age children in the household), Health Visitor (where appropriate), references from your employer if employed, as well as personal references.

It is also necessary for us to contact former partners if you have been in a previous significant relationship. Some criminal convictions could prevent you from becoming a foster carer, but many will not. Please phone us if you are not sure. Being honest is an important and essential asset in being a foster carer.

9. Frequently asked questions.

If I am going to be a main carer are checks needed on my partner?

Yes.

If there are 2 adults in the household, such as husband and wife or mother and daughter, both will have to be assessed and approved. Anybody over 18 who lives in your household will also need to be checked and take an active part in the assessment process. Also, any other adults who you feel will have significant contact with the child will be police checked.

Can a child I foster share a bedroom with one of my own children?

This is possible, but not usual.

However, each child and their situation is different. They would need to be the same gender above a certain age, and discussions would need to take place with the child's Social Worker to ensure that no-one is put at risk. Only you know whether you feel your child is willing to share their space.

Can I foster and continue to work?

Yes.

However, it could limit you to respite fostering or to older children who are more independent.

However, you will need to consider school holidays and also what you would do if a child was unwell or excluded from school.

Can I choose the length of time a child stays with me?

You will be able to state a preference as to which type of fostering you wish to do including timescales.

However, it is often very difficult to determine how long a placement is needed as situations regarding where a child should live are often very complicated.

Can I choose which age group or sex of the children I would prefer to foster?

Yes. We all have different skills, some people are better with teenagers and some with babies, some with boys and some with girls. Decisions can be made during the assessment process about your preferred age group and sex of the children through discussion with your Fostering Officer.

How much will I know about the child or young person prior to them being placed with me?

You will be given as much information as is necessary to care for the child; some information may not be relevant to your role as a foster carer.

Will the child continue to attend their own school?

If it is a long term placement then it could be beneficial for them to attend your local school to help them become part of that community. However, it may be felt that the child needs to maintain some stability and familiarity within their life and remain at their current school.

It would usually be your responsibility to take the child to their school. However, circumstances will be looked at individually, taking into account your other responsibilities.

Who is responsible for taking the child to health appointments etc?

You will be responsible for taking the child to health appointments, and sometimes the birth parents may also be encouraged to attend where appropriate. There may also be times when the child's Social Worker will need to attend. Again, your other responsibilities will be taken into account.

Can I take a child out of the country for a holiday?

This is possible.

However, you will need consent. This needs to come from whoever has parental responsibility, which could be a birth parent and/or the local authority. Any decision made will also need to take into account what is in the child's best interest.

Am I allowed to discipline the child?

You are not allowed to administer any form of physical punishment to a child in your care. You will need to think of other ways to help the child understand what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.

What help would I receive for a child who has any special needs or a disability?

Newport has a team of Social Workers and Occupational Therapists who can offer you advice as well as maintaining contacts with the child's school. Your Fostering Officer can also keep you updated about various courses available to you.

What allowances would I receive? What does it cover? Will I be taxed?

You will receive an allowance for each child which is banded according to the child's age. This allowance has been designed to cover nappies, food, toiletries, school uniform, after school clubs, pocket money and a proportion of your household bills. You will receive an extra allowance for the child's birthday and Christmas.

Any money that you receive for you to use for the child is not considered an income; therefore you will not be taxed on it.

Will I have to meet the child's parents?

This will depend on individual circumstances.

There may be occasions where your paths will cross at a contact session with the child's parents, or at one of our nurseries; parents are also part of the child's review meeting.

It is not compulsory to have the parents in your home, but obviously children may tell their parents where you are living. If it has been decided that it would put the child or your family at risk to know your details or see you, then every effort will be made to conceal that information from them.

Will children have contact with their birth family? Will I have to be there?

Most children have contact with their birth families, including parents, grandparents and siblings. This may be at a 'supervised contact' which usually takes place at a neutral venue and will be supervised by a Social Worker.

Some children may have unsupervised contact when their parent(s) has them for a few hours. Younger children often have contact with their parents at one of our nurseries and this gives the Social Worker an opportunity to assess the parent with their child.

There may be occasions where it could benefit the child if you were involved with some contact sessions. Each situation will be decided on an individual basis.

Can I use babysitters or childminders?

Babysitters can be used on occasions. This will need to be discussed with the child's Social Worker and your Fostering Officer. This will need to be someone who has been police checked (CRB).

If a childminder is needed, Newport has access to childminders who are approved to care for children who are fostered.

It is important to remember that there is support there for you, but a foster child is your responsibility and it may not benefit that child to go to a childminder on a regular basis unless it was an emergency or if the Social Worker felt that this would benefit the child.

Can I foster if I am in a same sex relationship?

Being in a same sex relationship will not stop you from becoming a foster carer.

You will be assessed on your parenting skills and your ability to provide a safe and secure environment for a child.

Can I foster if I am in receipt of State Benefits?

Yes you can.

Speak to one of our Fostering Officers about your individual circumstances.

Do I have to have a medical?

Yes.

All potential foster carers and their partners need a medical to ensure that they are physically able to provide a consistent level of care to a child.

Once you are approved medicals are updated at regular intervals.

How long will the process take?

From the point of your contact with us to your approval can take up to 6 months and whilst this may feel a long time, you will be fully involved with the process.

Following the 'Skills to Foster' training you may be receiving regular visits as part of your assessment which forms the main part of your approval. This time is needed to ensure that you and your Fostering Officer are confident that you and your family are suitable for the task.

Many people enjoy the process and can learn a lot about themselves.

10. The next steps.

Get in touch, even if you have more questions to be answered.

If you feel ready for the process to start, fill in the attached form and post it to us. We will be in touch as soon as we can and will come and visit you at home.

Telephone: **01633 656 656** or Email: **fostering@newport.gov.uk**



Newport Children & Family Services

I would like to take my interest in fostering further.

Please contact me at the address given below to arrange a home visit.

Name(s):

Address:

.....

.....Postcode:.....

Daytime Telephone Number:

Email:.....

I became interested in fostering because:

• I know a foster carer

• I saw a newspaper advert/article

Which Paper?
.....

• Newport fostering publicity

Please give details:
.....

• Newport City Council website

• TV/Radio feature on fostering

Please give details:
.....

Other

Please give details:
.....

Please return to:

Newport Fostering Team,
Children & Family Services,
The Corn Exchange,
High Street,
Newport NP20 1RN

Application form

If you would like this information in another language or format, please contact the Social Services Public Information Officer on **01633 656 656** or email: **swhinfo@newport.gov.uk**

For further information visit **www.newport.gov.uk/fostering**

