



Foster for Staffordshire

Fostering Information Pack

Supporting **you**
to make a difference

 Staffordshire
County Council

fosterforstaffordshire.co.uk

Foster for Staffordshire

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Foster Carer for Staffordshire County Council. We are your local authority fostering agency and we urgently need foster carers across Staffordshire. Whether you have no experience of fostering or are an experienced foster carer who currently fosters for an agency, we would love to hear from you. We offer competitive payments, unparalleled training and development opportunities and 24/7 support.

We have put this information pack together to tell you more about the fostering assessment process, the different types of fostering we offer and to hopefully answer some of your questions.

We need foster carers throughout Staffordshire, including Stafford, Stone, Lichfield, Rugeley, Burton-on-Trent, Cannock, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Leek, Tamworth and all the surrounding areas.

Join our Fostering Family and we'll provide you with all the training and support you need so you can concentrate on caring for our children.

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What is fostering?

Fostering happens when a child goes to live with a foster carer because they cannot live with their own family at a point in time. Whatever the reasons for this, it's a difficult time for them, so they need a stable home and plenty of support, care and understanding. This is where you come in.

Why are children fostered?

There are a wide range of reasons why a child may not be able to live with his or her family at a point in time these include:

- Abuse – physical, sexual and emotional
- Chaotic lifestyles
- Domestic violence
- Neglect
- Parental illness or hospital stays
- Parental mental health difficulties/ learning difficulties
- Parents' abuse of drugs and/or alcohol
- Poor support systems
- Poverty
- Teenage pregnancy
- Most children are subject to court orders

Fostering is often considered to be the best way to support children and young people by providing them with a safe, secure and nurturing family environment either on a short or long-term basis.

Fostering allows them to keep in contact with their own families including other siblings who may also be in foster care.

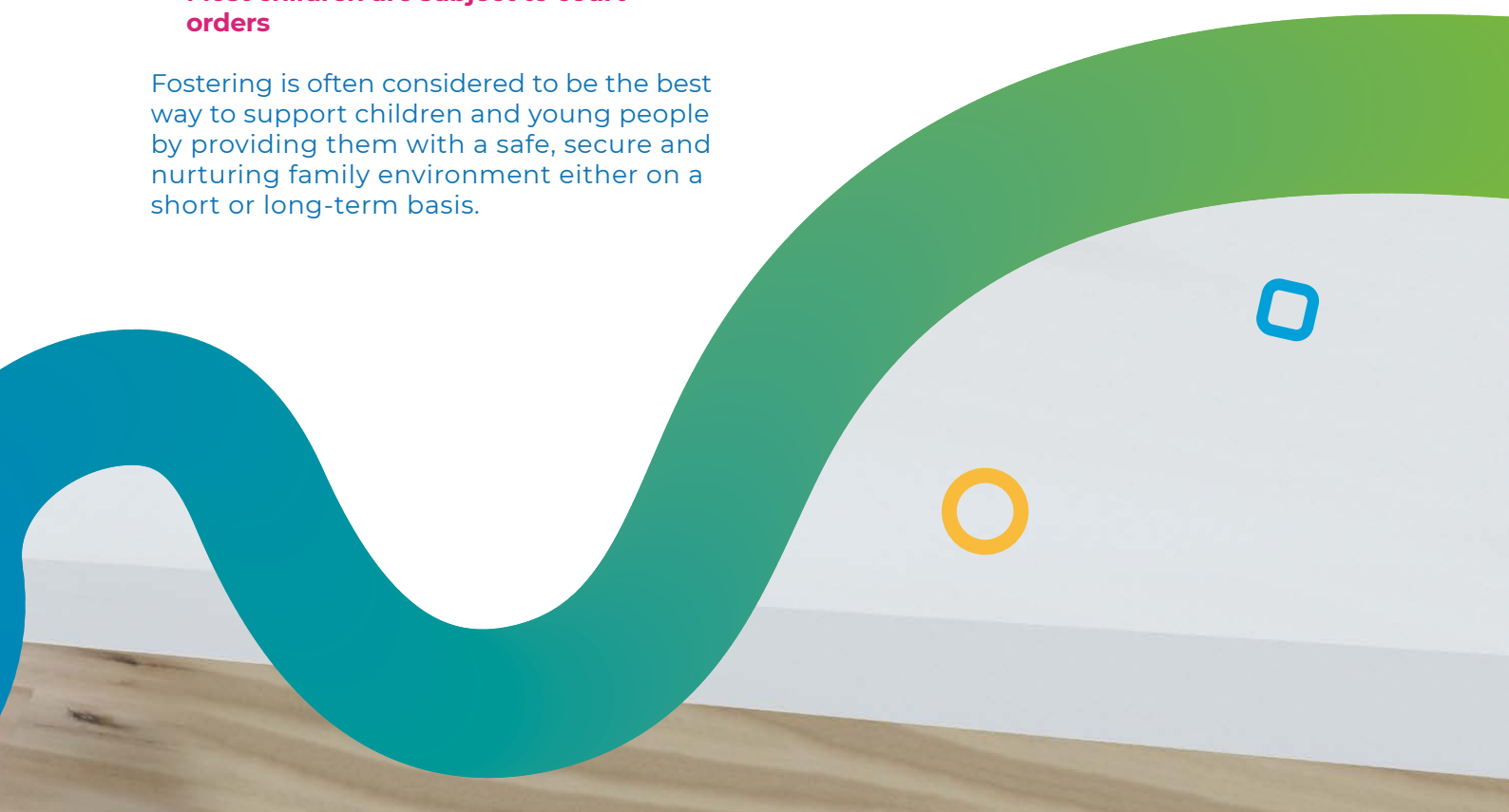
Who can foster?

There is no such thing as a typical foster carer, we need people from all different backgrounds to care for children from birth up to 18 years. We always have a greater need for foster carers for older children and larger sibling groups.

All our children are different; different ages, genders, ethnicities and personalities. But they all have one thing in common. They need stability, consistency and a loving family environment so they can develop and grow.

If you have relevant childcare experience you may have the option to be paid at a higher level when you commence fostering with us. Examples of this include childminders, teachers, residential support workers, teaching assistants.

Fostering with Staffordshire is flexible and there are so many different types of fostering we are confident you'll find one which suits your family commitments and personal circumstances.



What do I need to foster?

- A spare bedroom
- A stable and loving family home
- A sense of humour and lots of patience
- Free time to be able to attend meetings and training
- An ability to work with a wide range of professionals
- Be open and honest during the assessment process and on-going
- Offer advice and support to every child and nurture their skills

What are the different types of fostering?



Task Centred Fostering

Task Centred fostering involves caring for a child/ren whilst their long-term care plans are decided. You could be preparing a child to return to their own family, to an adoptive family or long-term foster carers or helping older children to get ready for living independently. This can be for a few weeks, months or up to 2 years.



Long Term Fostering

Long term fostering involves caring for a child/ren who cannot currently return to their birth family and for whom adoption isn't appropriate. This is a long-term commitment as the child/ren will live with you until they either return home or live independently.



Supported Lodgings

Supported Lodgings is an alternative to foster care and offers young people aged 16-19 the opportunity to live in a family environment but where they are given more independence.

Instead of being a Foster Carer you become a Supported Lodgings Host. As a Host you provide the young person with practical skills such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting which they will need when they move into independence.



Disability Short Break Fostering

Disability short break fostering supports children who have a mental or physical disability and their family. You look after the child or young person for a regular short break often once a month maybe overnight during the week, for a weekend or in the school holidays.



Resilience and Residential to Fostering

Resilience and Residential to Fostering foster carers provide long term foster care for young people aged 8-18 years who currently live in residential care and are ready to transition to a family home. Foster carers must have a specialist background in working with young people who have challenging behaviours or emotional difficulties.



Short Break Fostering

Short break fostering involves providing regular short stays for the same child. You would look after a child overnight during the week, for the weekend or in the school holidays.

Can't decide? We'll help you find the right kind of fostering for you and your family.





Already Fostering?

Transfer to Staffordshire!

Joining us is quick and easy!

If you are already a foster carer and thinking of leaving your current fostering agency, then we would love to hear from you.

You don't need to inform your fostering agency you are thinking of leaving them at this stage, we would be happy to visit you on an informal basis and to answer any questions you may have.

Here are the reasons to transfer to us:

- We will always place a child with our own carers before approaching other agencies.
- You can care for children aged 0-18 years who are carefully matched to your family.
- We can match the rates you are currently being paid by your agency.
- Our training and support groups take place across Staffordshire meaning you won't have far to travel.
- We value your experience and skills and any previous training courses can be counted we will just need to see your certificates.
- You will have a dedicated social worker to support you through every step of the process and one of our experienced foster carers as a mentor.

- 24/7 out of hours support and access to therapeutic services

Ready to transfer now?

Call us on **0800 169 2061** and we'll arrange for one of our social workers to come out and visit you.

"We transferred to Staffordshire County Council because we had heard about all the training and support available which really makes a huge difference."

Jackie, Foster Carer



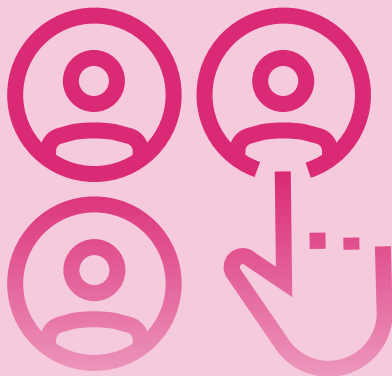
The Assessment Process



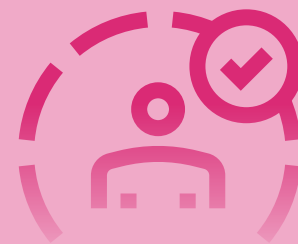
1. Information Meeting



2. Initial Visit



4. Foster Panel



3. Training and Assessment



5. Fostering Starts – Your First Child!

The assessment process normally takes between four and six months

The Assessment Process

1. Information Evening

Attend one of our information evenings where you can discover more about fostering for Staffordshire County Council. You can meet our team and one of our experienced foster carers and find out about the children needing your support. We will also give you a detailed information form to complete and return to us if you wish to continue.

2. Initial Assessment Visit

Once we have received your form, we will arrange a visit with you in your home to discuss your personal circumstances and what you can offer. There will also be an opportunity to ask further questions about fostering and we will look around your house.

3. Training & Assessment

To help you develop your skills and knowledge to become a foster carer you will need to attend training. This is delivered during the day, evening and at weekends. You can pick the best day and time for you. Whilst completing the training you will be allocated a social worker who will undertake an assessment. The assessment process is a way of finding out about your potential as a foster carer. It will help us and yourselves to decide which children/young people you may be able to care for. Your assessing social worker will need to get to know a lot about you and the members of your household. We aim to complete your assessment within 20 weeks.

4. Foster Panel

Following your assessment, a report will be presented to our fostering panel who will consider your application. Once you have been approved as a foster carer you will be looking forward to welcoming a child into your home whether this is for a month, a year or a lifetime.

5. Your First Child

Once you have been approved our placement team will contact your social worker with suitable children who you can then decide if you would like to foster. It is ok to say No to the first one! We will make sure we find the right child/ren for you and your family.





Our Fostering Family

At Staffordshire County Council we have an active and supportive community of foster carers across the County.

We have events to support our foster carers, including our amazing summer barbeque, Christmas fair, sons and daughter events and long service awards

We also have 16 support groups running monthly across Staffordshire which our foster carers love to attend and share their fostering experiences with.

We'll support you to make a difference

Fostering with Staffordshire County Council is different because we are a trusted, not for profit organisation with a wealth of experience and expertise in supporting families and communities.

We've been rated as 'Good' by Ofsted because of the support we give to carers and families.

We make sure that you're fully prepared and supported to become a foster carer and ready to meet the needs of different children.

You'll undertake tailored training before you're approved, and we'll continue to support you to develop your professional skills with training throughout your fostering career.

As a Staffordshire County Council foster carer, you're part of a much bigger team. You'll have your own fostering social worker who will be there to support and advise you as well as a fostering mentor, who you can contact 24/7.

And you'll be amazed at just how many Staffordshire foster carers live near you, with support groups for you and your family, you'll be able to get to know them, socialise and support each other and become part of a bigger community.



Our Expectations

What we expect from our foster carers

Attend meetings

You will need to be available to attend meetings regarding children in your care during the day. You will advocate for them at school or with other professionals helping them to get the support they need.

Commitment to training

You will need to attend the Foundations to Fostering training to become a foster carer and then complete 21 hours of training every year after that.

Promoting family time

You will need to promote family time which is where the children meet up with their birth or extended family members.

Move children on

You will need to help children move on, some children will stay in foster care, others will go back to their birth families or extended family or friends, some may move on to long-term foster care or adoption.

Our Foster Carers

“Knowing that you are making a difference to a child’s life is the most rewarding thing ever. It isn’t always easy though and has its challenges but there is plenty of help and support available from the fostering service and you’re never on your own.” *Kelly, Foster Carer*

“Fostering keeps you young and comes with great support and training from your local council authority. Everyone has life skills they can pass on to a foster child too, so go on, give it a go.” *Cliff, Foster Carer*

“Fostering is so rewarding although it’s not without its challenges. But we would never change things and the rewards always outweigh the challenges. There’s also lots of different types of fostering too, so there will definitely be an option that suits your family life.” *Brian & Sandra, Foster Carers*

“We’ve been fostering for 6 years now and have loved every minute of it. I think it’s important that siblings stay together and it’s fabulous to watch them grow up together.

“Fostering is something that will change your life and if you are thinking about it then I would encourage you to get in touch and take that first step.” *Nicola and Matt, Foster Carers*

Am I ready to foster?

As part of the approvals process you will need to meet the following criteria and have considered the following implications of fostering:

- Be over 21, and capable to meet the demands of parenthood.
- Be in reasonably good health, fit and well enough to care for children into adulthood.
- Be able to offer a secure home with a spare bedroom.
- Have the time to foster.

Working and Fostering

- Children who are below school age need a full-time foster carer.
- You can work and foster but you need to consider how you can balance the needs of a child who is living with you with your work commitments.

- If you take a school aged child, you may need to be able to attend meetings or appointments with them during the day.
- You need to be able to stay at home and care for a child if they are ill or not in school.
- You may need to transport the child to school and family time with birth family.
- Full-time work may limit the frequency and type of fostering which you are considered for and Short Break Fostering may be more suitable for you.

Financial Implications of Fostering

- To foster we need to know you are financially stable.
- You can't rely on fostering as an income as there may be gaps when you have no children staying with you even though you have space.

I'm interested what happens next?

Call our Enquiry Line on:

0800 169 2061

and ask for an initial visit from one of our social workers.

Keep in Touch:

 @fosterforstaffs

 @fosterforstaffs

Visit:

fosterforstaffordshire.co.uk

