



Steps to foster

Information for prospective foster parents in the North East



fosteringpeople
let's change lives together

Consistently
Outstanding
since 2013





Welcome to Fostering People, I'm Lynne Maddocks, your Service Manager in the North East.

I'm delighted that you're interested in fostering and especially with us; Fostering People. We currently have over 360 foster parents across the UK and over 35 in the North East. Due to the local way in which we work, we know each of our fostering families personally. Here are just some of the comments our foster parents have made about their personal experiences of fostering.

"Fostering is so rewarding, when children are first placed they can be very subdued. Once they settle down they become part of the family, they come out of school and run up to you. I absolutely love fostering." – **Pauline**

"It's the best thing I've done, wish I had done it years ago." – **Sharon**

"I can just remember people saying to us they thought we couldn't foster when we told people what we were planning, but I just thought why not? We are so glad we did, as we are loving the journey, helping others and seeing their achievements. Our own children are great with our foster children, they say that like fostering as they like to help people and they like to play with them. It's real job satisfaction and hopefully our own boys will grow up with understanding and compassion for others." – **Lisel**

At Fostering People we are the first choice provider to 51 local authorities across England and Scotland. This means that local authorities approach us first when they're seeking a great quality foster parent placement. We've achieved this position due to the high quality service we provide.

What does this mean for you as a foster parent?

You're much more likely to have consistent placements with an agency that works in partnership with your local authority and you'll benefit from the outstanding support we provide.

This brochure is designed to give you all the information you need to make an informed decision about fostering, but we're only ever a phone call away, so please call us if you have any questions and we'll be happy to help. Freephone **0800 077 8159**.

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Why choose us?

At Fostering People, we do one thing and we do it exceptionally well – fostering. We focus all our energy on helping people to become excellent foster parents and supporting them to make a real difference to children's lives. It's why we're one of only four independent agencies in England to be rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted across all categories, for the last three inspections.*

We are also rated as 'Excellent' in Scotland by the Care Commission. This means that we provide a consistency of quality across the agency. We also strive to continuously improve, which is how we have managed to maintain our outstanding results for so many years.

Proud to be local

We really do work in and around the communities our foster parents live in. So when we promise reliable, local support; we mean it. You won't have to travel to an office every time you want to see your social worker or speak to a member of our team – they'll visit you at home.

The same goes for training and support groups. We hold them in community venues as close to our foster parents' homes as possible, making it easy for you to get to know fellow foster parents and build a strong support network.

You won't have to get used to having conversations with an answerphone message either. You'll receive a personal response when you call us and a member of our team will always be ready to chat.

It's just one of the reasons why 97% of our foster parents say they are happy with the support they receive.

Excellent support

We wouldn't expect you to foster alone. That's why we provide all our foster parents with a comprehensive package of support. Better still, it's available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We're passionate about the care we provide to children, that's why we take your preparation to become a foster parent so seriously. At Fostering People, during your assessment, you will receive 'Skills to Foster' training and undertake our initiative 'Next Steps' programme to fully prepare you for fostering. We also give all our new foster parents an 8 week induction programme to help you to manage the day to day of fostering, understand systems and procedures and to help you become a vital part of the Fostering People team.

*Results from January 2019.



What is fostering?

Fostering is when a child in care is placed with foster parents because they're unable to live with their own family.

Our foster parents support these children and provide them with a stable, safe family home for as long as they need it – this could be anything from a few days or weeks to months, years or until a young person reaches independence.

There are all sorts of reasons why children come into care and each will have their own life story. Every child is an individual which is why we offer different types of fostering placements.



What's the difference between fostering and adoption?

Fostering is very different from adoption. When you adopt a child, you become their legal guardian and you're responsible for them just as you would be for your own children. It's not the same when you foster a child – their legal responsibility remains with the birth family or, in some cases, the local authority.

What's the relationship between Fostering People and local authorities?

Local authorities are responsible for all children placed in public care. It's their responsibility to find the best way to look after each and every child.

Sometimes that'll be with a local authority's own foster parents or within a residential children's home, but at times they'll need to look outside to an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) like Fostering People, to find foster parents who can best meet the needs of the children in the right location. How often does this happen? Well, each month we receive over 2000 referrals for children in need of a foster family.

As an IFA, we work in partnership with local authorities to provide the very best standard of care for all young people.

We have contracts in place with our local authority customers. These have been awarded to us through a tender process.

This means that local authorities approach us first when they need to find a good quality fostering placement. As an IFA, fostering is all we do, so our team is made up of specialist social workers and support staff who work hard to support you as a foster parent and ensure the needs of the children placed with you are met to the highest possible standard.



Fostering and work

Many foster parents work as well as foster. They've found a way to work and be able to put a child first.

Before thinking you can work and foster, it's important to ask yourself, could I take time out of work to attend meetings and training sessions, see social workers, take children to contact with their families and, in some cases, drop everything to be there if something happens at school or if the child falls ill?

We offer a very competitive fostering allowance so you may discover, like many of our foster parents, that one member of your household can commit to fostering full time. So whether you wish to maintain your current employment, or are looking for a new role; we'd be happy to discuss this with you when you contact us.

Fees and allowances

At Fostering People, we're proud to be local. However, working in local communities doesn't just mean we can offer great support – it means we can offer our foster parents better financial allowances too.

That's because we don't have a large infrastructure of offices to support. As a result, our foster parents benefit from generous fostering allowances that enable them to commit their time and attention to fostering.

You'll begin receiving your fostering allowance as soon as a child is placed in your care. The amount you'll receive varies from placement to placement but will cover expenses including food, clothing, travel and bills, along with an additional fee to reward you for your hard work.

Our foster parents currently receive between £385 and £731 per week, per child, depending on the age of the child and the types of placement. For example, foster parents looking after a physically disabled child, will receive more. To see the most up to date information regarding our fostering allowances, go to the allowances section of our website or try out our financial calculator.

We'll expect you to use this allowance to provide food, clothing and pocket money for the child in your care, as well as contributing to a savings account and all fees associated with school and clubs.

HMRC offer generous tax allowances to foster parents; as a result many foster parents pay no tax at all. Help regarding tax is available to foster parents via membership of 'Foster Talk' which Fostering People provide.



When you become a foster parent with us, you'll receive:

- A comprehensive two-month induction programme
- Supervision and support from a qualified and experienced social worker
- Consultations with qualified therapists
- Paid respite and/or holiday
- Regular local support groups, meetings and forums
- A generous package of financial support
- Access to an extensive post – approval training programme that meets the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for foster parent. Most training takes place in groups, however we do offer some training courses which are on-line to enable you to complete at a time to suit you.
- Membership of Foster Talk; an independent organisation offering impartial support to foster parents including educational, legal and financial advice.

Supporting you

We understand that, to succeed as a foster parent, you need to feel supported in your role.

That's why we're available every hour of every day to ensure you get the help and advice you need, when you need it.

We believe our comprehensive, flexible package of support is the best you'll find. In fact, Ofsted has rated the quality of service we offer our foster parents as 'outstanding' – three times. Not to mention, being rated as 'Excellent' by the Care Inspectorate in Scotland.

We're really proud of our achievements, but we won't always have all the answers. That's why we describe ourselves as a 'learning agency'.

When situations happen that teach us something new, we build the learning into our practice to help further improve the support and services we offer.





Foster parent training

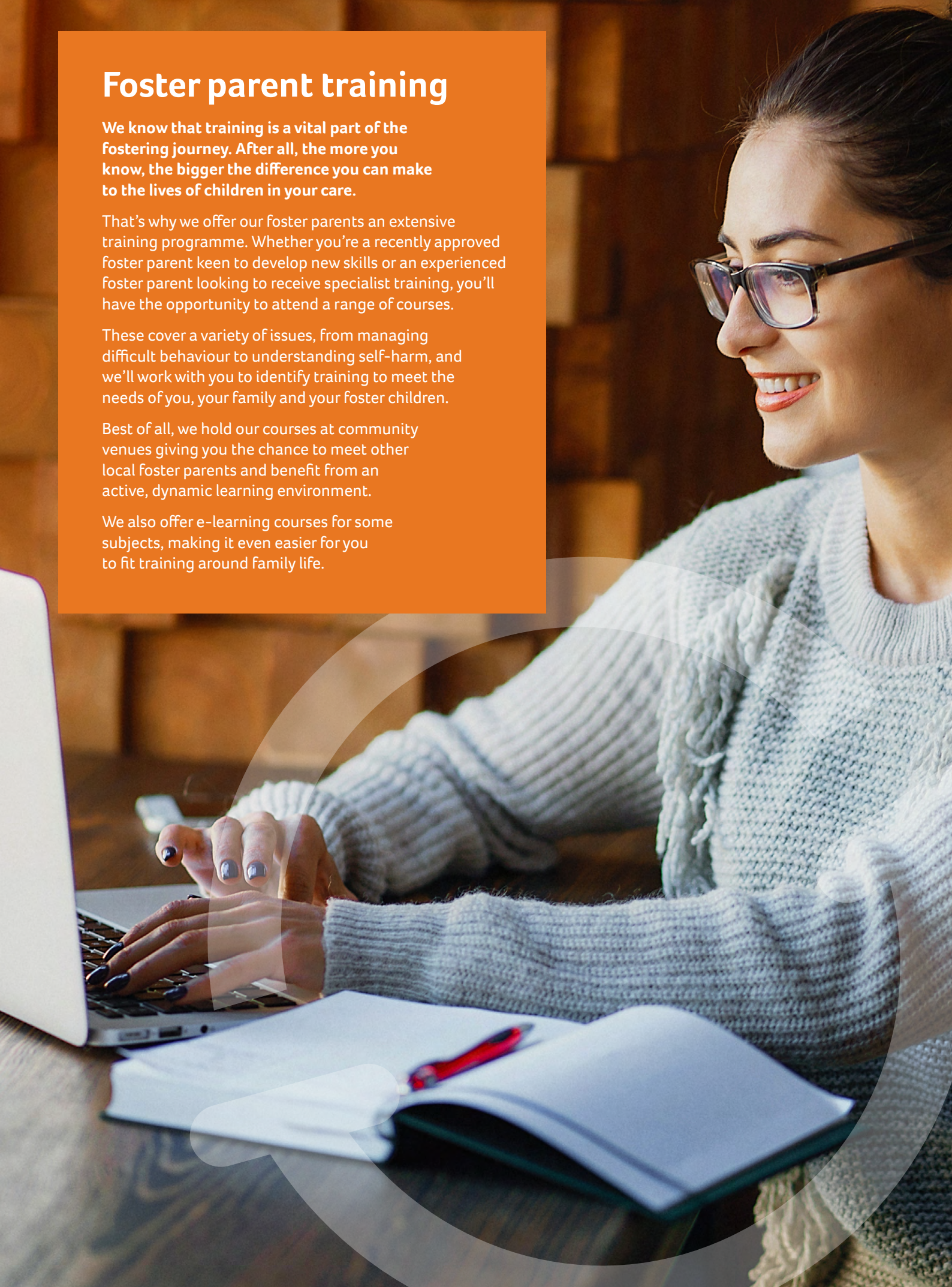
We know that training is a vital part of the fostering journey. After all, the more you know, the bigger the difference you can make to the lives of children in your care.

That's why we offer our foster parents an extensive training programme. Whether you're a recently approved foster parent keen to develop new skills or an experienced foster parent looking to receive specialist training, you'll have the opportunity to attend a range of courses.

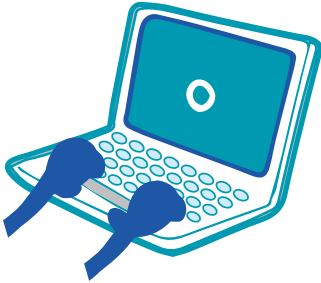
These cover a variety of issues, from managing difficult behaviour to understanding self-harm, and we'll work with you to identify training to meet the needs of you, your family and your foster children.

Best of all, we hold our courses at community venues giving you the chance to meet other local foster parents and benefit from an active, dynamic learning environment.

We also offer e-learning courses for some subjects, making it even easier for you to fit training around family life.

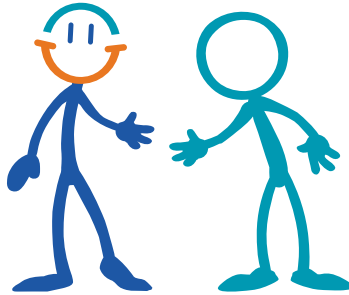


Your 5 steps to foster



1 Initial enquiry

You've already made an enquiry with us and taken your first step!



2 Home Visit

Having received our 'Steps to Foster' booklet, one of our friendly team will be in touch to arrange a home visit to have a more in depth conversation.

The home visits will enable us both to get to know each other. After all, it's only by getting to know one another that we both will know if fostering is really right for you and your family or if we are the right fostering provider for you.

Following this process, we'll invite you to make an application to us. It's possible that we might feel the time isn't quite right for you to foster, if this is the case we'll let you know and, if appropriate, offer you advice on other alternatives.



3 Training

Our preparation training is exactly what it says; a course to prepare you for fostering. We've had great feedback on our courses and people really enjoy it, even when they haven't expected too.

The sessions are relaxed, not like a traditional classroom. Applicants learn a great deal while having some fun.

The sessions can also be very thought provoking and reflective as you'll see the care system from the view point of a young person. The sessions are a great way of meeting other applicants and friendships are often formed. The course usually takes place over a weekend and is attended by both applicants if applying as a couple.

Alongside this training, you'll also complete our 'Next steps to fostering', you do this in the comfort of your own home, during the assessment process and your assessing social worker will guide you.





4 Assessment

An experienced social worker will begin a home study, getting to know you and the important people in your life. This allows us to find out more about you while providing you with as much information and advice as you need.

The social worker will visit you at home approximately eight times. They will meet with your personal referees, members of your household and any adult children you have living away from home. An in-depth report will be prepared by the social worker and will include contributions from you. The completed assessment report is called a 'Form F'.



5 Fostering panel

The fostering panel consists of a group of people (most are independent of Fostering People) who have a wide range of both professional and personal experience of fostering.

The fostering panel includes experienced social workers, foster parents, people that have grown up in foster care, and people with experience in working with children.

The fostering panel also has legal and medical advisors who help them in the decision making process. The fostering panel receives a copy of your 'Form F' report before the meeting to allow time to consider this carefully.

Fostering panel members have full regard for confidentiality and will always welcome the opportunity to meet with you when your application is considered.

The fostering panel will make a recommendation to the agency decision maker, Oliver Kirkland. Oliver considers your report, the views and recommendation of the panel and then makes the final decision to approve your fostering application.

The whole process takes approximately four to six months.



Is fostering for me?

Fostering is a unique role and is highly rewarding, but it's not for everyone. You need to really like children and understand the complex needs and behaviours they can display. You'll need to have stamina, humility, courage, warmth, humour, resilience, patience, forgiveness and an open mind. It doesn't take a superhuman to foster – ordinary people have these qualities by the bucket load.

Things to consider:

- A spare room is essential to give a foster child and your own children their own space and privacy.
- We're looking for people with both energy and life experience, so it's unlikely we'd consider anybody under the age of 25 to become a foster parent unless you have significant child care experience. The legal minimum age to foster is 21.
- We know that all children need a lot of attention, but most foster children have missed out on this parenting and will require even more of your time and attention. You must be prepared to be there for them and will need to consider if your family lifestyle will enable you to dedicate this time to a child.
- Although we're here to support you in your fostering role, your own support network or family and friends can really help too.
- Whilst overcoming challenging situations can be a real asset for a foster parent, if you're currently experiencing difficulties, now might not be the right time for you to consider fostering. Most children who need foster care have had to cope with a lot and you need to be able to put their needs first.



Types of foster care

Children need foster homes for different reasons including as a result of family breakdown, neglect, abuse or family illness. Although each child is different, they'll all have experienced loss and are likely to miss their birth family.



Short-term fostering

This involves caring for a young person on a temporary basis for a few days, weeks, months or even a few years while arrangements are made for their future. A child may require short-term care as a result of a parent becoming ill or because of emergency care proceedings. Short-term fostering can involve higher levels of contact with the child's birth family than other forms of fostering.



Long-term fostering

This involves looking after a child or young person on a permanent basis until they reach adulthood and are ready to live independently. This type of placement is often used when a child is deemed too old for adoption or would prefer not to be adopted.



Parent and child fostering

This specialist type of care involves a young parent and child, normally a mother and baby, but not exclusively, living with a foster family when they need extra support and care. Our parent and child foster parents offer parental advice and guidance, and often contribute towards parenting assessments.



Transition fostering

These specialist placements enable young people to make the transition from living in institutional settings, such as children's homes, to a family environment. These placements are ideally suited to experience foster parents or those with experience of caring for teenagers.



Respite fostering

Respite involves a child staying with another foster parent while their regular foster parent takes a short break, normally for the weekend or a little longer. Some foster parents just provide respite, others provide respite alongside longer term placements.



Sanctuary seeking fostering

This involves caring for a young person who has been separated for his or her family and is applying for asylum in the UK. These young people have often travelled long distances, may not speak English and can be frightened or confused. It helps if the foster parent shares the same language, culture or religion as the child in their care, but experience of working with people from other cultures can be just as important.



Remand fostering

Many young offenders are better placed in foster care than in an institution and family support can reduce their risk of re-offending. Remand fostering is a specialist type of placement suited to foster parents who have worked with offenders in the past. As a result, out remand foster parents receive an enhanced package of support.



At risk of exploitation

Some young people need protecting from being exploited. We will provide you with the training and support to help a young person at risk to settle and make safer choices.



Disability fostering

At Fostering People we run a bespoke Disability service, providing children with autism, learning difficulties, physical disabilities and medical conditions with foster parents who are able to meet their complex needs.



Foster parents for children with disabilities come from a range of backgrounds and experiences, some have significant health or caring experience, others receive specific training to help them meet the needs of the children they are caring for. At Fostering People we want to provide all children with foster placement that enables them to thrive and meet their fullest potential.

If fostering a child with a disability whether learning, physical or both interests you, please do let us know.

Becoming a foster parent for a disabled child can seem quite daunting. But don't worry, here at Fostering People you're supported by a specialist disability social worker who has significant experience of working with disabled children.

Many people think that they can't foster a disabled child because their home isn't adapted for wheelchair use; but many children with a disability don't use a wheelchair, but for those that do, adaptations can be made at the point of placement if you're the right match for a child.

“Don't underestimate yourself. Be willing to give disabled children a chance – you will learn a lot from it and will reap the rewards!”

Could you become a foster parent?

My name is Lisa, I am 7 years old.
 I like living where we are because
 we do creative stuff. My carers
 care for me and they love me. They
 give me lots of hugs and kisses. They
 tuck me into bed. They give us
 pocket money and lots of toys
 and Hello Kitty teddies.
 We get cake. We have fun and tell
 jokes and they have bought me
 pretty dresses and jewellery.



If you're wondering whether you're suited to fostering, the statements below are designed to offer a guide. Don't panic if you haven't said 'yes' to all the points, but it may help you decide if you're ready to move forward.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I enjoy living or working with children and young people | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I have an ability to stand back and reflect, rather than always rush in | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I'm in good emotional and physical health |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I'm very honest with myself and others | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I like working as part of a team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ If I have a partner or other people in my household, they want to foster too |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I'm able to adapt my current lifestyle and routines to accommodate a child's needs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I've had a few knocks in life, but I've survived | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ The thought of tantrums, swearing, mood swings, loud music, defiance and the general joys of adolescence doesn't put me off. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I understand that a child will show their distress through their behaviour | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ My home is clean and comfortable | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I have a good sense of humour | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I can drive and have a reliable car | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I'm resilient and will see things through, even when the going gets tough | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I have a good network of people around me to provide encouragement and support | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X ✓ I don't have any major unresolved issues in my life | |



Sexuality, gender and ethnicity



Relationships, sexuality and gender

At Fostering People, we welcome foster parents from all background. We believe it's the qualities you bring to fostering that make you a great foster parent, not your sexuality or gender.

We have many LGBT foster parents; some are married, others cohabiting and some are single. Many people think you need to be married or in a relationship to foster. This simply isn't true. We have many single foster parents who provide brilliant care to children – and our single male foster parents are every bit as valuable to us and to young people as our single female foster parents.

We know it can be helpful to talk to experienced foster parents who've been through the same thing. That's why, when you apply to foster with us, we'll put you in touch with foster parents from your local area who can share their experiences with you.

Fostering and ethnicity

Wherever possible, we try to place children with families who share the same ethnic background.

However, we know this isn't always possible, nor does it mean that a foster parent can't meet all of a child's cultural needs.

We recruit foster parents from every ethnicity. All we ask is that you have leave to remain in the UK and that if English is your second language, you are able to communicate using English well.



Meet just one of our great foster parents

“There’s no greater sense of satisfaction than knowing that you’re making a difference to a child’s life.”

Meet our foster parents, Joanne and Stephen.

Joanne and Stephen become foster parents for *Fostering People* in 2012. Joanne previously worked in the care industry, but didn’t receive the job satisfaction she was yearning for. *Fostering* presented the couple with an ideal solution, allowing Joanne a career caring for children whilst offering a loving, safe and stable home for children in need.

Since 2012, Joanne and Stephen have offered a home to eight young people, both long and short term placements. The couple currently foster three young boys between the ages of one and nine. One of these boys has been with the couple for three years and suffers from learning, language and social difficulties.

This young man was placed on respite but become a long-term placement because his challenging behaviour improved dramatically under the couple’s care. Joanne and Stephen successfully

applied to become his permanent foster parents, which means Joanne and Stephen are his forever family.

For Joanne, watching young people blossom in her care has made fostering the greatest job she’s ever had. She said, “Watching children achieve the unexpected is the best part about fostering. Small achievements, such as witnessing them read their first book or achieving their first educational award, are all huge milestones for these young people, yet they are accomplishments that so many others take for granted. There’s no greater sense of satisfaction than knowing that you’re making a difference to a child’s life”.

Joanne and Stephen didn’t plan to foster children with learning disabilities, but were extremely happy to do when presented with the opportunity, and their experience has meant that they would consider doing it again. The couple have cared for a parent and baby who was blind. The pair stayed with Joanne and Stephen for six months, with Joanne offering help and support to

the young mum as she adjusted to her new role as a parent. “That placement was extremely difficult at times”, recalled Joanne “particularly at the start, as our help wasn’t always valued. However, it has proven to be one of our most rewarding placements to date. Stephen and I are still closely in touch with the family, and were delighted to be asked to be the baby’s Godparents earlier this year.”

Despite the challenges of fostering, the couple believe that nothing beats seeing young people grow and develop in themselves. Joanne, who wanted to become a foster parent as a way of helping people, hopes that sharing their story will inspire others to consider fostering too. “No other career offers the same level of job satisfaction. It’s honestly the best decision we’ve ever made, and I can’t imagine doing anything else. Our evenings wouldn’t feel right without having all of our young people around our dinner table discussing their day. For us, it’s all about family time”.

Where are we?

Across the North East we support foster families across:

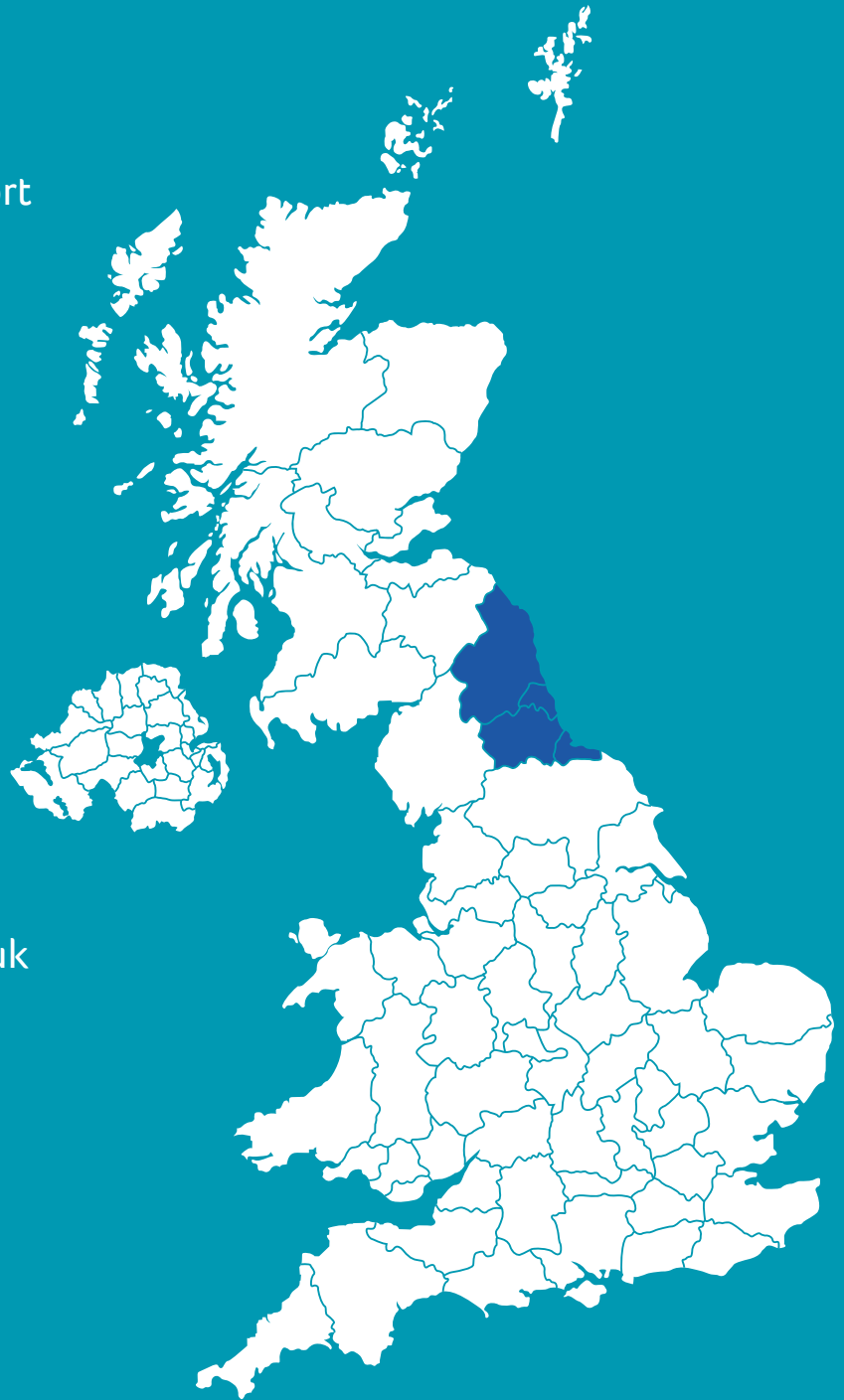
- Northumberland
- Tyne and Wear
- Co Durham
- Teesside

What now?

Give us a call on
0800 077 8159 to
arrange a home visit.

Contact us:

0800 077 8159
enquiries@fosteringpeople.co.uk



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