



Steps to foster

Information for prospective foster carers in Scotland





Welcome to Fostering People, I'm Cassie Yeaman, your Service Manager.

I'm delighted that you're interested in fostering and especially with us; Fostering People. Fostering People was established in 2013 in Scotland. Since then, we continue to go from strength to strength, gaining a reputation with the local authorities we serve for providing great quality family placements.

We know all of our fostering families personally, which means as a foster carer with Fostering People you are an integral part of our organisation.

Fostering People have been awarded a place on the Scotland Framework Agreement for Fostering Services.

What does this mean for you as a foster carer?

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. **01382 787480.**

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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 carers and supporting them to make a real difference to children's lives.

We're rated as 'Very Good' in Scotland by the Care Inspectorate. This means that we provide a consistency of quality across the agency. We also strive to continuously improve.

Proud to be local

We really do work in and around the communities our foster carers 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 carers' homes as possible, making it easy for you to get to know fellow foster carers 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 our foster carers 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 carers 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 carer so seriously. At Fostering People, during your assessment, you will receive 'Prepare to Foster' training and undertake our initiative 'Next Steps' programme to fully prepare you for fostering. We also provide a robust induction programme for all our new foster carers 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.



What is fostering?

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

Our foster carers 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 carers 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 carers who can best meet the needs of the children in the right location. How often does this happen? Well, each month we receive many 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 will approach us 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 carer and ensure the needs of the children placed with you are met to the highest possible standard.

Fostering and work

Many foster carers 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 and from school, to family time 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 carers, 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 carers better financial allowances too.

That's because we don't have a large infrastructure of offices to support. As a result, our foster carers 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 carers currently receive between £474 and £508 per week, per child, depending on the age of the child.

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 carers; as a result our foster carers pay no tax at all on their fostering income. Help regarding tax is available to foster carers via membership of 'Foster Talk' which Fostering People provide.





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

- A comprehensive induction programme
- Supervision and support from a qualified and experienced social worker
- Consultations with qualified therapists
- Paid short breaks and/or holiday
- Regular local support groups, meetings and forums
- A generous package of financial support
- Access to an extensive post – approval training programme. Most training takes place in groups, however we do offer some training courses which are online to enable you to complete at a time to suit you.
- Membership of Foster Talk; an independent organisation offering impartial support to foster carers including educational, legal and financial advice.

Supporting you

We understand that, to succeed as a foster carer, 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, the Care Inspectorate has rated the quality of our service we offer to our foster carers as 'Very Good'.

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.





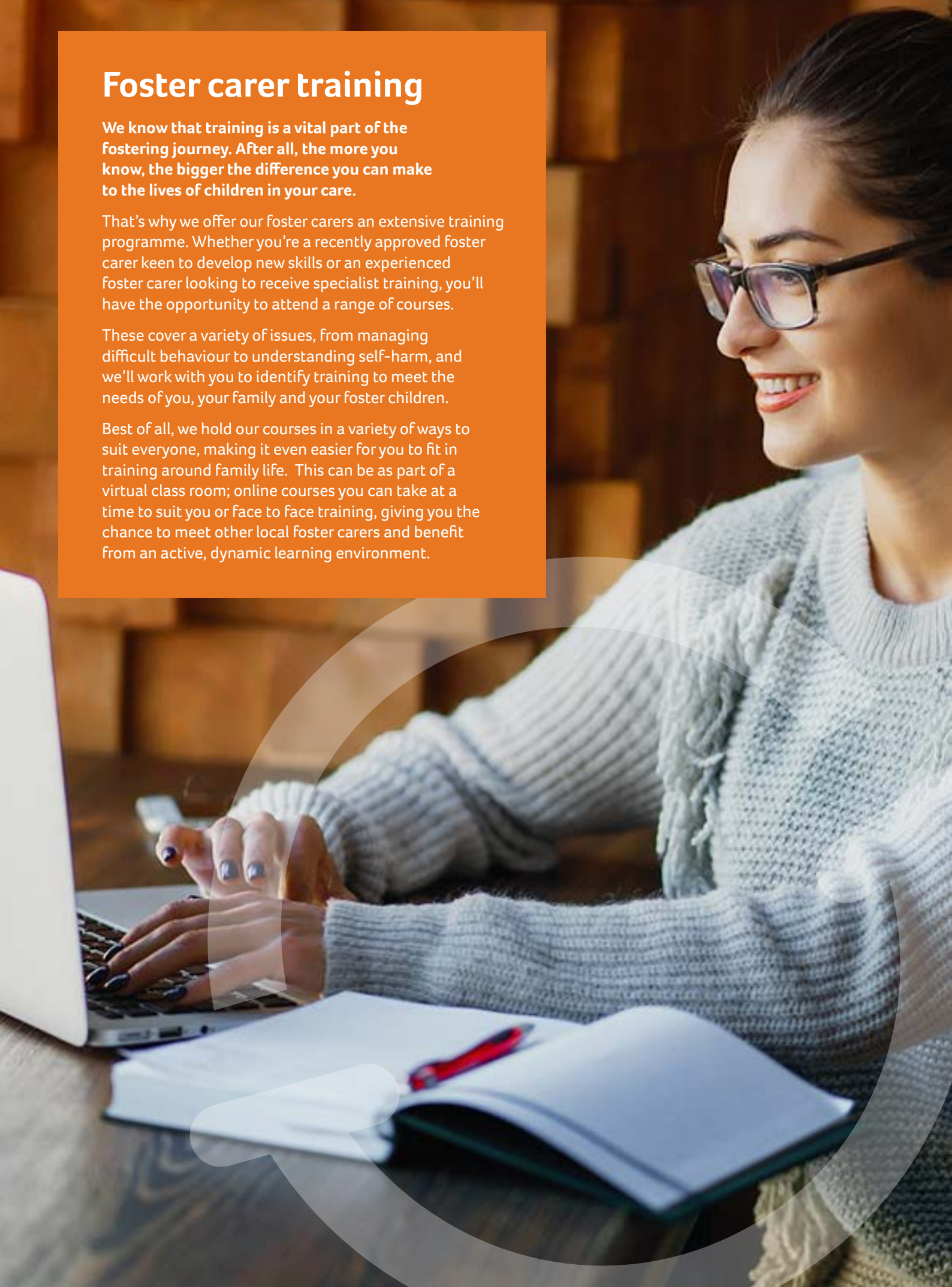
Foster carer training

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.

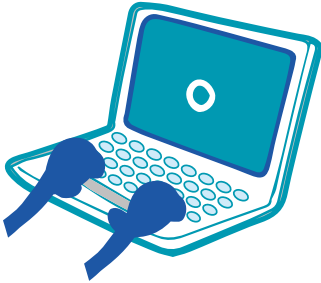
That's why we offer our foster carers an extensive training programme. Whether you're a recently approved foster carer keen to develop new skills or an experienced foster carer looking to receive specialist training, you'll have the opportunity to attend a range of courses.

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 in a variety of ways to suit everyone, making it even easier for you to fit in training around family life. This can be as part of a virtual class room; online courses you can take at a time to suit you or face to face training, giving you the chance to meet other local foster carers and benefit from an active, dynamic learning environment.

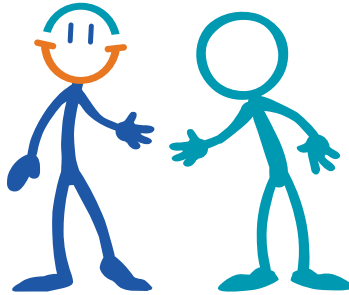


Your 5 steps to foster



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 is attended by both applicant 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 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'.

Whilst this is taking place, we'll also be undertaking your statutory references and checks including a Disclosure Scotland check.



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 carers, 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, John Platt. John 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 carer 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 be able to enable you to dedicate this time to a child.
- Although we're here to support you in your fostering role, it's important that you have your own support network of family and friends to help you in your fostering role too.
- Whilst overcoming challenging situations can be a real asset for a foster carer, 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.



Interim fostering

Interim fostering describes any fostering placement that has not been secured by a permanence order. It can last for one night, weeks, months or even two years while arrangements are made for their future. Most children come into care on an interim fostering arrangement whilst plans are made for their future.



Long term fostering

This involves looking after a child or young person for more than 2 years. Long term fostering is an arrangement that ensures a young person is cared for with the same family for as long as they need it, but where permanence hasn't been made. As a result this type of fostering may not last until a young person reaches adulthood.



Permanence 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.



Short break fostering

Short break fostering involves a child staying with another foster carer while their regular foster carer takes a short break, normally for the weekend or a little longer. Some foster carers just provide short breaks, others provide short breaks alongside longer term placements.



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.



Sanctuary seeking fostering

This involves caring for a young person who has been separated from 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 carer 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.



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 carers offer parental advice and guidance, and often contribute towards parenting assessments.



Disability fostering

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



Foster carers 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 a foster family 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 carer 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 carer?

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 help with teddies.
 We get cakes, 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"/> ✓ I enjoy living or working with children and young people | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I have an ability to stand back and reflect, rather than always rush in | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I'm in good emotional and physical health |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I'm very honest with myself and others | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I like working as part of a team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ If I have a partner or other people in my household, they want to foster too |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I'm able to adapt my current lifestyle and routines to accommodate a child's needs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I've had a few knocks in life, but I've survived | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ 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"/> ✓ I understand that a child will show their distress through their behaviour | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ My home is clean and comfortable | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I have a good sense of humour | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I can drive and have a reliable car | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I'm resilient and will see things through, even when the going gets tough | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ I have a good network of people around me to provide encouragement and support | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓ 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 carers from all background. We believe it's the qualities you bring to fostering that make you a great foster carer, not your sexuality or gender.

We have many LGBTQIA+ foster carers; 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 carers who provide brilliant care to children – and our single male foster carers are every bit as valuable to us and to young people as our single female foster carers.

We know it can be helpful to talk to experienced foster carers 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 carers 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 carer can't meet all of a child's cultural needs.

We recruit foster carers 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 carers



Meet our foster carers, Mhairi and Stevie.

Mhairi and Stevie, are a young newlywed husband-and-wife-team living in Perth and Kinross. They started fostering together in 2022.

They are currently fostering siblings – a six-year-old boy and a five-year-old girl – all while running a large country hotel together.

The pair wanted to start fostering as a way to give back to the community.

Mhairi explained: “My parents friends fostered when I was growing up. I pretty much grew up with their children and then their foster children too. It made me quite aware that I had quite a privileged upbringing so I just wanted to be able to give other children the same upbringing that I had.”

While opening their home to foster children was her idea initially, Stevie needed a little bit more convincing.

Mhairi said: “I remember telling him that he’s seen the struggles of low-income families, growing up where he did. Children with a lot of additional needs that might not be getting the support that they need, kids from his area that could do with a family like the one we’ve got, and he agreed.”

The pair attribute some of their success as foster carers to the skills they have picked up from running the hotel. Working in hospitality has allowed them to work with people from several different backgrounds, something they’ve found useful on their new fostering journey.

“It’s even taught me how to deal with some challenging situations involving traditions and customs from different cultures as well,” Stevie added.

Mhairi and Stevie have also found that running the hotel together has meant they can better balance parenting and their roles as hoteliers.

“It’d definitely be more difficult if we didn’t work together. We have a great dynamic and relationship where one of us can pick up the slack at work if the other one is concentrating on things at home and vice versa. It means we can juggle things quite nicely.

“That’s not to say it can’t be done if you don’t work together! It’s just a bit easier when we can shift the school drop-offs and things – we just make sure we talk to each other and share the load.”

What’s different about life now that they’re foster carers?

“The lack of sleep!” half-joked Mhairi. “I need way more sleep than Stevie, so he kindly takes most of the mornings.”

“I think it’s how organised we need to be now,” Stevie explained. “If we’re heading out, we need to make sure we’ve got a bag packed for the kids. Snacks, drinks, spare clothes, you know. Everything also needs to have some structure, as Ricky* can sometimes get a little unsettled – sometimes that can be tough.”

The couple did explain however that they are now able to regain some spontaneity.

“It’s not a carefree life of course, it won’t be with any kid but it’s getting easier. Ricky* is learning to trust us more and is getting

more familiar with things. They’ve both really settled in actually, it’s lovely to see. Seeing them become less anxious and more comfortable has been really rewarding.”

When asked if they wanted to bust any myths about fostering, the couple both brought up the idea that children in care are ‘bad kids’.

“Foster children are no more difficult than someone’s own children. Yes, they may have some quirks and there might be some traits you need to get your head around but that isn’t specific to kids from care,” said Mhairi.

Stevie agreed adding: “There’s no such a thing as a bad child. You do hear all the rumours that kids in care are going to be nightmares but they’re just not. They might have had some challenges in life, which they’ve often had no control over.”

Advice for new and prospective foster carers

Stevie had some advice for new foster carers. “Keep your eyes open for training opportunities. There’s so much to do and learn.

Mhairi’s advice? To take everything with a pinch of salt.

“Things like reports can be very formal and intimidating. I’ve read reports before and thought ‘Oh no, are we doing the right thing? Our life’s going to be turned upside down!’ Take things with a pinch of salt and be open-minded. A child’s report isn’t their identity, it can often boil down to the situations they’ve previously been in.”

fosteringpeople

let's change lives together

What now?

Give us a call on
01382 787480 to
arrange your next step.

www.fosteringpeople.co.uk/scotland

Contact us:

Unit F, Software Centre
Prospect Business Centre
Gemini Crescent
Dundee Technology Park
Dundee, DD2 1TY
Fostering People Ltd
01382 787480



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