

Interested in becoming a Foster Carer?

Introduction

Foster care is looking after a child or young person in your own home for however long is needed, hopefully keeping them close to the community they know, and in touch with the families they love.

It involves being part of a team, meeting and working with social workers, families and the young people themselves as plans are made for their future.

Foster care means helping looked after children understand their circumstances and maintain a sense of their identity, assisting them too as they face uncertainty and change.

Being a foster carer requires patience, tolerance and understanding in the face of behavior, which can be challenging and disturbing.

At its best, foster care sees children in need living happily and successfully in foster families, within conditions and boundaries agreed and observed by all. This is our aspiration for all our looked after children in Torfaen.

Why do children and young people need foster care?

Children and young people might need to be looked after because of neglect or the effects of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. They may require short or long term care, or perhaps just a short break from a family crisis.

Many return to their parents eventually, but some will remain permanently with foster carers or go on to be adopted.

Who are foster carers?

You can be married, single or in a single-sex relationship. You may have your own children or none, or have children who have now left home. You might be in work, retired, self-employed or working part time. Whether you own or rent your home doesn't matter and neither does your religion or ethnicity. All we ask is that you like children and parenting, and that you have space in your home and your life to care enthusiastically and with dedication for someone else's child. You must also be able to accept the possibility that the child may return home, or move on, and that this might be painful for you.

How do I become a foster carer?

Information packs are available from our Family Placement Team. A representative from the team will be happy to visit you at home if you wish to find out more. If still interested in becoming a foster carer, you will be asked to attend our mandatory *Skills to Foster* course.

If you still wish to become a foster carer, a Family Placement Team social worker will visit your home a number of times to get to know you and your family better, and make an initial assessment of your suitability as foster carers. You will need to provide three references, consent to Criminal Records Bureau checks, and satisfy us regarding your health by consulting your GP for a medical examination.

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Documentary evidence from the examination will need to be passed to our own Medical Officer of Health. When the assessment process has been successfully completed, you will be referred to Torfaen's Fostering Panel for approval.

Do foster carers receive training and support?

Yes - the assessment process begins with training – the *Skills to Foster* course. You will also be encouraged to attend a whole range of courses after approval that will help you understand and better carry out the role of foster carer. The Welsh Government expects all foster carers to attend at least three such training events annually for their professional development. No formal qualification is required, although experience of caring for children is an advantage.

Monthly supervision is provided through contact with your Family Placement Team support worker, and we organise monthly support groups that you will be encouraged to attend.

In your early days as a foster carer, we will provide you with a personal mentor who will be able to give you support and advice.

We also provide an after hours telephone support service.

Do foster carers get paid?

All Torfaen foster carers receive a Family Placement fee and a fostering allowance to cover the cost of clothing, food, day-to-day care and pocket money. Mileage, birthday and Christmas allowances are also available to meet individual children's needs.

Allowances are not a wage and dependant on earnings maybe non-taxable.

Our contact details

If you need more help, please contact us.

Telephone: 01495 766693

E-mail: familyplacementteam@torfaen.gov.uk

Our Address:

The Family Placement Team
Torfaen Social Care and Housing Services
Civic Centre
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 6YB

This factsheet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request. Please contact us in order to arrange this.