



# Fostering

Family Placement Service

**Every child needs a family**



## What is Fostering?

Fostering is looking after a child or young person in your home and caring for them while their own families are unable to do so. This may be for a very short period of time or it could be a long-term arrangement.

## Why become a Foster Carer?

Fostering can be a life changing choice - the satisfaction of knowing you have helped a child by offering them a family environment whilst their own family are experiencing a crisis can be enormously rewarding.

**Fostering can be hard work at times, but tremendously rewarding.**



*'I wish I had done fostering years ago. It is the most rewarding thing that I have done in my life.'* Foster Carer



## What is the role of the Foster Carer?

- To provide a caring, secure family environment
- To meet all the child's day to day individual needs
- To promote contact for the child with their family wherever possible
- To work alongside Children's Services team workers and other agencies.
- To help prepare a child to move back to their family or onto a new permanent placement through long-term fostering or adoption.

**There will be challenges, but with support and guidance from the family placement service, foster carers and other professionals you will meet these challenges and gain tremendous satisfaction from having been an important part of a child's life.**



*'When you can see a child smile, laugh - talk about what they want for the future it gives a sense of hope that what we do makes a difference as a family' Foster Carer*



## What are the different types of Fostering?

### **Short term fostering**

Carers are asked to be available to care for children in many different circumstances. One child may need only an overnight stay, whereas another child may stay with their carer for over a year.

### **Long term fostering**

This is often for school age children who cannot live with their own families, but who require a stable long-term placement.

### **Home from Home - Short Break Scheme**

This involves carers looking after children with a disability at regular, planned times. This could be overnight stays, weekends or holiday periods. Such breaks give parents a chance to recharge their batteries and can also offer the child a chance to experience new activities and friendships. *(More information on Home from Home caring can be obtained from our offices.)*

### **Supported lodgings**

This is an accommodation scheme designed for young people aged 16+, who are unable to live at home with their families, but who are not quite ready to live completely on their own. They are 'stepping stone' placements for young people to receive practical and emotional support to help them to gain independent skills and realise their full potential. *(More information on Supported Lodgings can be obtained from our offices.)*

### **Relief foster care**

This is designed to support families experiencing difficulties by offering children a regular break from home. This could be, for example, each weekend, or in school holidays, or perhaps one weekend in two. *(More information on relief foster care can be obtained from our offices.)*



## Who can be a Foster Carer?

Many different people become foster carers and they come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and circumstances.

You can be:

- single, married or divorced
- have a disability
- gay or lesbian
- of any ethnic origin or religion
- renting or owning your home
- a parent with your own children

We believe it is best for children to live with foster carers who reflect and understand a child's heritage, ethnic origin, culture and language, and so we need carers from all types of backgrounds.



*'You are never on your own. I get excellent support from my supervising social worker who is always there to provide advice and guidance whenever I need it.'* Foster Carer



Legally foster carers have to be at least 18 years of age, although we prefer carers to be over 21 years of age. There are no upper age limits for fostering, but fostering agencies expect people to be mature enough to work with the complex problems that children needing fostering are likely to have, and fit enough to perform this often demanding task!

You will need to have a spare bedroom if you wish to foster children and be able to transport children to school, medical appointments or similar.

Ultimately, we are looking for foster families who can offer support, guidance and a positive family environment in which children feel secure, valued and cared for.

**There is no such thing as a typical foster carer - we look forward to hearing from people just like you!**



*“The most challenging part of the job is in the beginning, it can take a lot of effort and patience to help settle a child in. But I do believe you get out what you put into child, so investing that time is always worth it” Foster Carer*



No formal qualifications are necessary but foster carers will need to have had some experience of caring for their own or other peoples' children. They will have or will be able to develop particular skills and abilities in order to provide and maintain a good standard of care to the children they look after.

We look for people who will:

- Understand the different needs of children
- Promote a child's health and education
- Respect and accept a young persons identity, sexuality, religion, culture, race, language and any special needs
- Encourage a child to develop and maintain friendships
- Show flexibility and resilience in handling a range of challenging behaviours
- Encourage and support contact with a child's parents and family as appropriate
- Develop their own skills through preparation and training

Slough offers training and support to enhance your skills as well as providing you with an opportunity to develop new ones.



**But, what matters most is that you have the time and space, commitment, patience, energy and above all the desire to care and work with both the children and their parents.**



## Why do children need to be fostered?

There are many different reasons why children of all ages may need foster care. Children may have suffered sexual or physical abuse, they may have been neglected or their parents may have experienced problems, making it difficult for them to care for their children.

Many children will return to their families but for other children permanent alternative care must be found. It is felt that for many of these children living in a family environment is the best option.

Children that have experienced trauma, abuse or neglect may demonstrate challenging behaviour. Foster carers need to work with parents, social workers and other professionals to help make decisions which meet the child's best interests.

## Is there a particular need in Slough?

Slough Family Placement Services are currently looking for carers for children aged 0-16 from a range of ethnic backgrounds, and are particularly looking for carers who may be able to look after school age children, teenagers, sibling groups and children with special needs.



*'There is never dull moment in the life of a foster carer!  
... and no it's not always easy, but the good times  
definitely outweigh the bad.'* Foster Carer of 10 years



## 8 Steps to becoming a Foster Carer

The whole process of becoming foster carer can take **up to a year**. This time gives potential carers the opportunity to discuss the situation fully with family, friends, members of social services and experienced foster carers.

The impact fostering will have on your home and work life needs to be thoroughly thought through. The fostering preparation group will help you examine your thoughts feelings and any concerns.

**Please note applicants will be assessed at each stage of the process in order to proceed to the next step.**

Step  
1

### Enquiry

If you would like to take your interest further after reading this information pack, please complete the initial enquiry form enclosed, and return this to us using our freepost address.

Step  
2

### Home visit

An appointment is made for a member of the Family Placement Service to visit you at home to discuss your enquiry. This will give you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have. (This could be held during the day or in the evening to meet your needs)

Step  
3

### Application

If you wish to continue with this process you will need to return your completed application form. You will also need to give us permission to undertake statutory checks on you and arrange for you to have a medical examination. We will be unable to pursue your application without this permission.

Step  
4

### Preparation group

You will be invited to attend a number of preparation and training sessions with other prospective foster carers. Experienced carers and children of foster carers will also be involved in the training sessions to give you their honest experiences!



**Step  
5**

**References**

We will carry out statutory checks with the local authority, Criminal Records Bureau, NSPCC and Probation Services. We will also ask you for the names of three people who would be willing to give you a reference. We will personally interview at least two of your referees. We will ask you to undertake a medical examination with your doctor.

**Step  
6**

**Assessment  
process**

You will be allocated a supervising social worker/linkworker who will undertake an assessment of your ability to foster to which you will be required to contribute. This assessment is completed during a number of visits over an approximate 6 month period.

**Step  
7**

**Fostering  
panel**

The completed report is presented to the Fostering Panel which is held once a month. They will make a recommendation to the agency decision maker about the age range, number of children and type of fostering you are being approved for. Applicants will be required to attend.

**Step  
8**

**Approval**

If approved, a child/children will be placed with you and you will be given on-going supervision, support and training.



*'I really like my mum being a foster carer'  
daughter of foster carer, aged 10*



## What support can I expect?

Slough Family Placement Service is completely committed to offering on-going support to all our Foster Carers through:

- A supervising social worker/link worker who visits on a regular basis to offer advice and support to foster careers and their families.
- Coffee mornings for carers once a fortnight.
- A support group that meets in the evenings every other month.
- A Saturday conference twice a year.
- Access to our psychology service for help and advice.
- Outings and social events for carers and their families.
- An out of hour's social work service for use in an emergency.



*'We enjoyed working with the department,  
and have had good support in all areas' Foster Carer*

## Training

Foster carers are required to complete a structured programme of training within the first year of their approval. One-to-one support from their supervising social worker/link worker is provided to help carers complete this. Carers will need to attend relevant training events and collect evidence into a Workbook of the knowledge and skills they have acquired.

Once this programme is completed, foster carers are then supported to undertake ongoing training that is relevant to their needs and to the children they are caring for. There is also the opportunity to undertake a National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in childcare, if carers wish to pursue this.



*'We had great support from staff and other foster carers... it has been a real learning curve.'* Foster Carer



## Financial support

Short term and long term foster carers currently receive a weekly payment fee for each child in placement, plus a weekly maintenance allowance for each child. The fees and allowances that you receive will vary according to the age group and number of children you care for:

- Carers will be paid a **weekly fee of £200**.
- You will also receive a **weekly maintenance allowance** for each child placed. This allowance is to cover the costs of caring for a particular child or young person. There is an expectation that you will budget and manage your allowance as you do for your own families.

The maintenance payment will include all the costs for caring for a child e.g. food, clothing, toiletries, personal needs (pocket money, fostered children's holidays, birthday and celebratory presents), household living expenses e.g. gas, electricity, water, telephone, equipment and wear and tear of household decoration and equipment.

**For more information about the financial support available, and payments made for the different fostering schemes, please call the Family Placement Team on 0800 073 0291 or email [family.placement@slough.gov.uk](mailto:family.placement@slough.gov.uk).**



## Your questions answered

### 1. What are the differences between fostering and adoption?

Fostering means you look after a child on behalf of a local authority from a few days to a number of years. Adopting a child means you become the child's legal parent.

### 2. Why do some children need fostering?

There are a number of reasons why children may require fostering. Some children may have been physically, emotionally or sexually abused and been removed from their parents by order of a court. Other families may be experiencing a temporary crisis and the children may need a short time away from their homes. What is important is that there is a foster family available nearby that can provide them with the care that they need.



*'The best thing about fostering experience is looking back at how the boys were when they first came to us and the progress they have made - it makes us feel proud knowing we played a part in that.'* Foster Carer



**3. What about contact with the children's birth families?**

Contact between children, their parents and other family members is usually maintained whilst the child is in foster care and foster carers often have a role in supporting these meetings.

**4. Do I need to live in a particular type of accommodation?**

No, foster carers can live in rented or private accommodation. Foster children over two years of age must have a room of their own (although siblings can sometimes share a room).

**5. Do I have to be married?**

No, we welcome enquiries from people who are single, married, living with a partner, divorced or widowed.

**6. Is fostering considered a job?**

All foster carers are registered with and contracted to a local authority or voluntary or independent agency. Many foster carers are volunteers, but increasingly they are seen as professionals and receive a fee on a basis of being self employed (see financial support for Slough Foster Carers)



*'People ask us if it is a difficult job and our answer is yes - but then what job isn't when you want to do it well?' Foster Carer*



### 7. What if I have health concerns?

All enquiries are considered on an individual basis. However, as long as your health concerns are not life threatening and our medical advisor considers that the concerns will not impact on your capacity to be an effective foster carer we will be happy to consider your application.

### 8. What if I smoke?

We follow advice from BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) and the Department of Health regarding smoking and passive smoking. We will not normally place a child under 5 or a child with a medical condition such as asthma in a household where adults smoke. We would not refuse enquiries from people who smoke, but we would strongly encourage anyone who does smoke to take active steps to give up, as this is likely to benefit you and any children in your care.





**9. Are there any age restrictions?**

Legally foster carers have to be at least 18 years of age, although we prefer carers to be over 21 years of age.

**10. Are there any support agencies I could contact?**

There are a number of support agencies that can be contacted for information and advice.

**Fostering Network**

87 Blackfriars Road

London

SE1 8HA

Tel: 020 7620 6400

**British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)**

Saffron House

6-10 Kirby Street

London

EC1N 8TS

Tel: 020 7421 2600

Website: [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk)

Thank you for your interest. We hope this information will encourage you to return the enclosed enquiry form.

## How to contact us

Address: Slough Family Placement Service  
Slough Borough Council  
St Martins Place  
51 Bath Road  
Slough  
SL1 3UF

Free phone: 0800 073 0291

Email: [familyplacement@slough.gov.uk](mailto:familyplacement@slough.gov.uk)

Website: [www.slough.gov.uk](http://www.slough.gov.uk)





If you would like assistance with the translation of the information in this document, please ask an English speaking person to request this by calling 0800 073 0291.

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज में दी गई जानकारी के अनुवाद किए जाने की सहायता चाहते हैं तो कृपया किसी अंग्रेजी भाषी व्यक्ति से यह अनुरोध करने के लिए 0800 073 0291 पर बात करके कहें.

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਵਿਚਲੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਬੋਲਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਨੂੰ 0800 073 0291 ਉੱਤੇ ਕਾਲ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਕਹੋ।

Aby uzyskać pomoc odnośnie tłumaczenia instrukcji zawartych w niniejszym dokumencie, należy zwrócić się do osoby mówiącej po angielsku, aby zadzwoniła w tej sprawie pod numer 0800 073 0291.

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اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز میں دی گئی معلومات کے ترجمے کے سلسلے میں مدد چاہئے تو، براہ کرم ایک انگریزی بولنے والے شخص سے 0800 073 0291 پر کال کر کے اس کی درخواست کرنے کے لئے کہیں۔

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