



**fosterplus**  
more than fostering

# Guide to the Fostering Assessment

Helping you to get  
started on your  
fostering journey

**Contact us**

t: 0800 3698512

[www.fosterplus.co.uk](http://www.fosterplus.co.uk)

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# Beginning your fostering journey

**Becoming a foster carer is a life changing decision, so we know that applying to foster can feel like a big step to take.**

This guide will explain everything you need to know about applying to foster, providing a clear understanding of the assessment process, so that you can step forward with a better understanding of what to expect.

Our team have been supporting people to become foster carers for 30 years. Our extensive experience, and consistent Care Inspectorate ratings of 'Very Good' in three out of the four areas inspected across all our offices, demonstrate our commitment to quality and the high level of support and training we provide to foster families.

From the moment you start fostering with Fosterplus, you will be provided a full network of ongoing support. Our professional team includes social workers, education advisors, therapists, and experienced foster carers – all there to support you along your journey of fostering.





## Why foster carers choose Fosterplus

- Complete support whenever you need it
- Dedicated local teams
- Unrivalled matching process
- Outstanding reputation
- Extensive, bespoke training opportunities
- Generous fostering allowance and benefits
- Support for the whole family
- Professional advice via therapists, education advisors and mentors
- Exclusive rewards and discount scheme
- Local support and family events



“  
 Every single day, even on the challenging days, I thank my lucky stars that my family and I took the initial leap to foster. It is life-changing but it is also life-enhancing and I can't imagine life without our children in it. It is busy, it is noisy, and it is challenging at times, but it is absolutely worthwhile.

-Brenda, foster mum”



“  
 I was a workaholic but thankfully fostering has allowed me to slow down and offer support to children who need it the most. Many of my friends were initially shocked when I told them I was changing my career, but now say it has been my calling in life.

Richard, foster dad”

8 offices  
 across  
 England &  
 Scotland

30 years of  
 making a  
 difference

Around 200  
 extraordinary  
 foster carers

Over 200  
 children in  
 our care



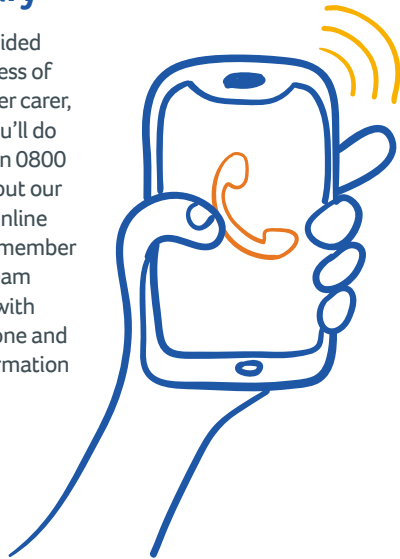
# The fostering assessment process

There are 6 clear steps to becoming a foster carer, and the whole process generally takes between 4-6 months to complete. Those months will fly by as you prepare to foster, and before you know it, you'll be welcoming home your first child.

## 6 steps to fostering

### 1 Enquiry

Once you've decided to start the process of becoming a foster carer, the first thing you'll do is give us a call on 0800 369 8512 or fill out our quick and easy online enquiry form. A member of our friendly team will have a chat with you over the phone and share more information about fostering.

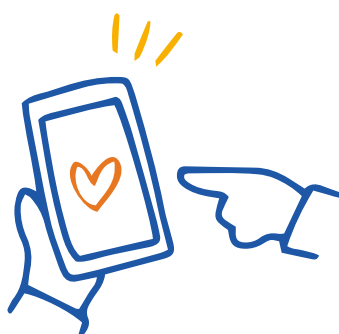


### 2 Home visit

If you're happy to proceed, one of our team members will arrange to visit you at home (or via video call). This gives you a chance to ask any questions and learn more about the process.

### 3 Application

Once you are ready to apply, you will fill in our application to become a foster carer. The application form is usually completed online and covers various pieces of information – but our team are there to support you and happy to help you complete this.



### 4 The fostering assessment

After your application is accepted, we'll carry out a full fostering assessment which will include 8-10 home visits, training days and a series of checks and references. All of this information will be compiled by a social worker into a document known as a Form F.



### 5 Panel

Your Form F document will be shared with a panel of fostering professionals who will confirm your suitability to foster, and make a recommendation for approving you as a foster carer.



### 6 Approval

The panel's recommendation will be shared with our Agency Decision Maker, who will let you know if you've been approved to foster. You'll then sign a contract with us confirming your status as a foster carer – and you'll be ready to welcome a child into your family.



Read on as we breakdown the steps in more detail, providing a full guide to the process of becoming a foster carer.

# Make an enquiry

Making an enquiry is easy, and it's your first step to fostering as part of our incredible team at Fosterplus. You can enquire with us either by giving us a call or by filling in our online form.

You'll then have an informal chat over the phone with one of our fostering advisors, who will give you tailored advice and answer any of your questions. If you meet the initial requirements and you're eager to proceed, you'll move onto the next step.



**Ready to  
enquire?**

Give us a call on  
**0800 3698512 today**



# Enjoy a friendly home visit

We'll arrange for a member of our team to come and visit you in your home, or sometimes via video call, to get to know you and your family, your background and what motivates you to foster. They'll give you all the information you need to decide if fostering is right for you, and will go in-depth on topics including the next stages of the fostering assessment, the training and support you'll be provided, and the fostering allowance we pay.

During the visit, you'll be encouraged to ask any and all questions you have about fostering - no question is silly, so ask away! Your visitor will also take a look at your spare bedroom to ensure that the space is a good fit to welcome a foster child.



## Home visit FAQs

### How should I prepare for my initial visit?

Talk with your loved ones about the visit, whether that is having a sit-down with your partner to discuss what questions you'd like to ask in advance, or explaining to your children who will be visiting and why. The member of our team who visits you will want to have an informal chat with everyone living in your home, so it's important that everyone is involved.

### If I have a visit from Fosterplus, am I obliged to continue with the fostering assessment?

No, the visit is intended to help you decide if fostering is the right fit for you, and so that we can evaluate if you're ready to foster. There's no obligation to continue with the process of becoming a foster carer if you decide that now isn't the right time.

**The advice I would give to someone thinking about fostering is just do it. Just do it, because if you're thinking along those lines, you're halfway there. Because you've obviously got space, and time to do it. Fostering needs you, and a child potentially needs you.**

-Dianne, Foster carer

# The fostering assessment



Your fostering assessment involves a detailed process, including 8-10 visits with your family, which can be either face-to-face or virtual. During these visits, your assessing social worker will chat with you about a variety of things including:

- Various aspects of fostering such as specific requirements of the role, your experience, and the different types of foster care placements.
- Your personal circumstances, career, relationships and family dynamics.
- Past history including your childhood, and any significant events in your life.
- Practical details such as support network, finances and physical and mental health.



## Your Form F document

The key part of your fostering assessment is the creation of a document known as a Form F. This document collates all of the information that will be needed in order for our fostering panel to make a decision on your application to foster. The Form F document is written up by your assessing social worker, and every foster carer in the UK must have one.

As they get to know your family, they will write up your assessment document, called a Form F, and ensure that you receive all the information you need to feel prepared for the fostering role.

During the assessment period, your assessor will carry out all the relevant checks and references that are needed, and you will also be invited to attend our Prepare to Foster training.

The entire assessment process usually takes between 4-6 months, but it's an effective and thorough process designed to support you to become a foster carer while ensuring your suitability to care for vulnerable children.

## Checks and references

Checks and references are a vital part of the fostering assessment process to ensure that children are being welcomed into safe and suitable homes. During the assessment stage we'll conduct a range of checks, including:

- ✓ A PVG check in Scotland for anyone in your home over the age of 16
- ✓ A health and safety assessment of your home
- ✓ A local authority check
- ✓ A pet assessment if you have animals living at the home
- ✓ A medical check with your GP
- ✓ A financial assessment
- ✓ A range of references from people in your life - including past and current employers, family members and friends

**"Initially I was dreading the assessment process. I'd always imagined it would be very daunting and invasive, but it was completely the opposite. I actually enjoyed the process. It was just like having a normal conversation. They were making sure I was right for what I was applying for, that I had all the checks in place and that I was doing it for the right reasons."**

-Stavrina, foster mum



# Fostering assessment FAQs

## Will I be asked sensitive questions during my fostering assessment?

Yes. For understandable reasons, the fostering assessment process is very thorough. You may be surprised by some of the areas we cover, which will include a range of sensitive topics. These might be regarding your childhood upbringing, any areas of difficulty within your past, your relationship with previous partners, and other areas of your personal history which may be uncomfortable to talk about.

Rest assured that this is a vital part of the process to ensure the safety of children, and that fostering is right for you and your family. If there is anything you are worried about, be honest - your assessing social worker will not judge you for your honesty. Everyone has their own story to tell, and here at Fosterplus we want to get to know the real you to understand what makes you a great fit for fostering.

## Is it necessary for Fosterplus to contact my previous partners?

Part of the assessment process is a requirement for character references from any previous romantic partners who you lived with for more than two years, or who you share children with.

We understand that this can be a very sensitive and upsetting part of the process, and treat this part of the assessment with particular care and consideration. If there is a legitimate reason why it would be inappropriate to contact a previous partner, we will instead accept character references from people in your life who knew you during the time spent in a relationship with said person.



# Our training programme

Here at Fosterplus, we have developed a training programme which is designed to give you all the tools you need to foster successfully, and with confidence. Fostering comes with a range of challenges alongside its many rewards, so we provide extensive training to develop all the knowledge and skills you'll need.



I have been with Fosterplus for over 14 years. The support, training and professionalism that they offer is beyond compare.

Sheila, foster mum



## Initial training: Prepare to Foster

Our 2-3 day mandatory 'Prepare to Foster' course is an excellent starting point for prospective foster carers. This course will be offered during your fostering assessment and covers many aspects including the basics of fostering, child development and safeguarding. There are no exams or written work involved, just a host of great information and the opportunity to meet other foster carers and gain a real insight from our skilled team.

## Mandatory training

Once you're approved as a foster carer you will be required to complete a series of mandatory training modules, on topics including:

- Safeguarding
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- First Aid
- Health & Safety

At Fosterplus, we offer a blended learning style, including e-learning modules, virtual courses and face-to-face training. Our training is designed to suit your individual needs and lifestyle, working around your commitments and recognising the busyness of day-to-day life.

## Additional training

You'll also have the opportunity to take part in continuous professional development by accessing our range of specialist courses. These cover a whole range of subjects you may find useful when fostering, such as supporting children through difficulties including grief, bullying and eating disorders.

Other subjects include understanding neurodiversity and the importance of nurturing a child's relationship to their culture. With a whole range of interesting and regularly updated training options, you'll always have the chance to further your skillset and professional development, completely tailored to you and your family.



# The fostering panel

The penultimate stage of the fostering assessment is the fostering panel. The fostering panel is a special meeting which brings together a group of people who will make a decision on your suitability of becoming a foster carer with Fosterplus. This can be completed in-person or virtually, and is not as daunting as it may sound.

You'll attend with your assessing social worker who has been by your side at every stage of the fostering assessment process – ensuring that your Form F covers everything it needs to support your application to foster. You can also bring along a friend or family member for support. The panel members will ask you some questions about why you'd like to foster, and will review your Form F document.

The panel meeting usually lasts about one hour. Towards the end, the panel will ask you to leave the meeting temporarily while they reflect on the assessment and make their decision. When you're invited back in, they will

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When she first came, she was scared and uncertain, now, she calls this home. She's settled. She's happy. She knows she belongs here. That's when I knew - I've made a difference.

- Alison, foster carer

”



let you know of their recommendation; either that you be approved as a foster carer, that your application is deferred while a little more information is gathered, or, in extremely rare cases, they may decide that you are not yet ready to foster at this time.

# The agency decision

The final stage of the fostering assessment process is for the panel members' decision to be shared with our Agency Decision Maker here at Fosterplus. Our Agency Decision Maker will have the final say in whether or not to officially approve you as one of our foster carers.

If you're approved as a foster carer, it's time for huge congratulations! You'll be informed of the decision as quickly as possible, and will be invited to sign a Foster Carer Agreement with us. After that, you're officially approved to foster a child!



## Fostering panel FAQs

### Who sits on a fostering panel?

Fostering panels bring together a range of people with fostering experience from outside our organisation. This can include social workers, therapists, educational specialists, current foster carers and care-experienced individuals.

### Should I be nervous about the panel meeting?

While it's natural to feel nervous when going into a room with a group of strangers, try not to be overly worried. The panel are there to help you make your final step towards fostering, and our team at Fosterplus wouldn't be sending you for your panel without being confident that you are a great candidate to foster. Everyone at a panel is cheering you on and wants you to succeed as a foster carer so that more children can find loving homes.

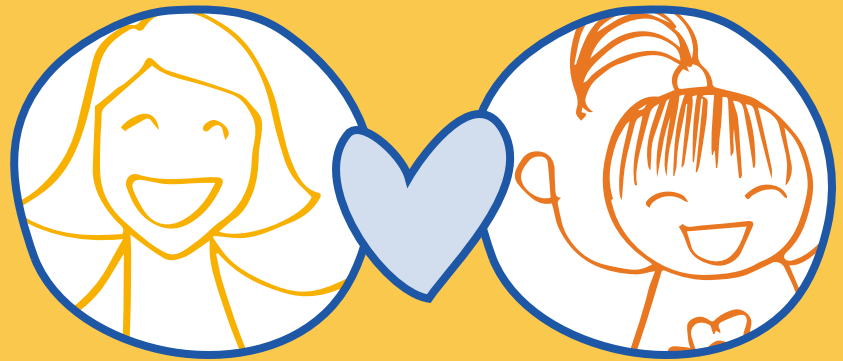


# Welcoming a child: Our matching process

Once you're approved at panel, our dedicated referrals team will begin working behind the scenes to find a child who is suited to your family and whose needs match your unique skills and experience. Your family's needs and preferences, as well as those of the child, will


be carefully considered during our extensive matching process to ensure that the right child is placed with your family. When we match foster carers with children, we involve everyone; sharing information openly and listening to everyone's views.

There's no pressure to say 'yes' when we contact you about a potential child - above all, we want to ensure that you are well suited so that you can grow and thrive together as a family. Our matching process for children and foster carers is unrivalled in its detail, commitment, and ability to secure positive, long-lasting foster care placements - with fewer unplanned endings than the UK average, and around only 3% of our foster carers usually awaiting a placement.



I felt that the team at Fosterplus knew me well. We discussed in detail the types of placements that would be suitable for my skills and experience and they were very insistent that it needed to be the right match so that both myself and the child in my care would have a positive experience... I felt confident in the process and knew that they would be there to support me when I needed it.

-Taryn, first-time foster mum



**Our social worker has been such an important part of our lives, she is there for us no matter the time of day. It's things like this that really stay with you.**

**-Sarah, foster mum**

## Your supervising social worker

After your approval as a foster carer, you'll have the opportunity to meet your designated supervising social worker, who'll be by your side as you begin your fostering journey. You'll form a close working relationship with your social worker, and they will be there to support you with anything you need, from helping you to prepare for welcoming a child, and providing guidance on any aspects of fostering and child behaviour. They will be your first point of contact as a foster carer, as well as being supported by your local team and our 24/7 phoneline. Whenever you need help or advice, there will always be a friendly face there to support you.

# Ongoing support with Fosterplus

From the moment you start your fostering journey with us, you will be provided a full network of ongoing support. We work daily with our foster families to ensure that they have everything they need to foster successfully, whether that be training that's tailored to you, in-person support groups, foster carer mentors, the support of our 24/7 phone line or a friendly chat and a cup of tea with your supervising social worker.

As well as the bubble of support we form around our foster families, you'll also benefit from:

Regular events for foster carers including coffee mornings, lunches, and guest talks with speakers

Regular free family days out

Online support hub for families, children and young people

Generous fostering allowances, with additional payments and benefits

Award ceremonies and foster carer appreciation days

The opportunity to get involved in charity events and fundraisers

Support from an Education Advisor and Psychotherapist

Support for all children in the family, including support groups and fun events

Access to our exclusive rewards platform for discounted holidays, days out and high-street retailers



# What our foster carers say...

**“ Fosterplus have always been such a great support throughout my fostering career which will be 10 years come this December. As a single carer at times it can be difficult when you feel alone with questions but Fosterplus are never too busy to take any questions I have. All the staff are approachable and really care about their carers and young people.**

-Brendan, foster dad

**“ From the first curious phone call, through the lengthy assessment, to panel and your first referral, Fosterplus are with you all the way. I can honestly say that I would not be able to continue my role as a foster carer without their support.**

-Sheila, foster mum

# What our foster carers say...

“  
Regardless of what happens during your fostering journey, you will always be supported wholeheartedly. That's the reason why I chose to foster with Fosterplus, as the level of support and care is just amazing.

Sarah, foster mum

“  
The team is phenomenal, and there's always someone at the end of the phone. You get plenty of training, too, both online and in person, and I've built a fantastic relationship with my Supervising Social Worker, who I very much see as a friend.

- Brendon, foster carer

”



# We're here to support you

Whether you've already started the fostering assessment process, or you're thinking of applying, our friendly team are here to help.

Give us a call on **0800 369 8512** or fill out the brief enquiry form on our website and we'll be there to answer any questions.

Fostering is a life-changing decision, not only for the children it helps, but for the individuals and families who make a difference every day by opening up their homes to children in need. We wish you all the best on your journey to becoming a foster carer.

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