

my
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Fostering Children in Northamptonshire

a month, a year, a lifetime, a month, a year, a lifetime,



Northamptonshire
County Council

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Working with children will be one of the most rewarding things you ever do. We know you've probably thought about fostering for a while now; it's great that you've taken the first step to find out more.

What is fostering?

For many of the children placed in foster care, it is a temporary arrangement and they will return to their own family.

Children need foster families for lots of reasons:

- Parents might ask for help looking after their children because of illness or they might be facing some other temporary difficulty
- Child protection agencies suspect that children are being neglected or abused and remove them from their families for their safety
- Some children are disabled and need either full-time care or short breaks with a foster carer
- Some children may not be able to return to their family and we will need to find them a permanent home

Children are in need of warmth, patience, commitment and understanding at a time of stress and uncertainty and by taking a child into your home at this difficult time, you can have a huge impact on their lives.

A fostering career changes lives!

Children need foster families for lots of reasons, but ultimately they need warmth, patience and understanding



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Martha's Story

About a year ago I contacted Northamptonshire County Council to get some more information about fostering. My partner and I both had grown-up children and felt we could give time to help another child. We were fortunate to be approved as foster carers and now have our first child in place with us. He is settling in well and although there have already been challenges it is also a rewarding and fulfilling role – we wish we had made the call years ago!



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What kind of people are we looking for?

First off, there is no such thing as an ideal foster carer, so please don't rule yourself out before talking to us.

We need a wide range of people with their own personalities and life-experiences. The most important thing is that you enjoy having children in your life whether it's for a month, a year or a lifetime.

- You need real commitment to look after a child for as long as they need to stay with you
- You need patience, flexibility, time and energy
- You need to have enough time to share with a child. So you need to think about how your work and other commitments will fit in with fostering
- You can live in a home you own or rent anywhere in Northamptonshire
- You may be single, married or divorced, living together, or a same sex couple
- It doesn't matter whether or not you have your own children or if they are still living at home
- You can be working, unemployed or retired
- You do not need any qualifications or experience. We will help you to gain confidence in your own abilities and develop new skills
- Criminal convictions in the past may not affect your application - though you should tell us about this right from the start

- Convictions for offences against children automatically disqualifies anyone from fostering
- You can be from any ethnic or cultural background, follow a religion or not
- You can foster if you are disabled, though this depends on the nature of your disability and the type of support you would need
- You need to show a willingness to work as part of a team
- Age isn't a barrier as long as you are 21 years old or over
- You need to be physically and mentally fit enough to look after a child. We ask applicants to have a medical examination. This will be arranged through your GP and, with your permission, the report is sent to our medical advisor, who decides if there is any medical reason why you should not be approved as a foster carer. We meet the costs of the medical
- Smokers cannot foster children under the age of 4 or children with respiratory conditions
- Pets are usually fine, but any that are considered to be dangerous might affect your application

People who decide to become foster carers need to think about what sort of fostering they would like to do.

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The Baines Family

We love being a fostering family! Six years ago we were lucky enough to be approved as permanent foster carers. After a careful introduction and a lot of planning, Aaron, who was then eight years old, came to live with us. Our children love having him as part of our family. Aaron is now fourteen and preparing to do his GCSE's and eventually would like to go to university. We can't imagine life without him!



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We know that fostering isn't about a one size fits all approach to childcare. There are children and young people from a variety of backgrounds who need foster carers.

Fostering – the options

A month, a year...

Short term foster care can be very rewarding for those families who enjoy a challenge. Children usually go initially to short term foster carers while decisions are made about their future. Children may arrive during a crisis and may be tired, frightened and hungry and will need a lot of care and attention to help them settle down. They may end up staying for several months or even years.

Part of the task of a short term foster carer is likely to involve working closely with the child's birth parent(s) to maintain contact.

Once decisions have been made about the children's future, short term foster carers have a vital role in preparing them for a move, whether it is back to their parents or on to a permanent foster carer or adoptive home. Saying goodbye can be both sad and yet satisfying, knowing you have helped a child through a difficult time in their life.

When the needs and demands associated with a child/young person's care are challenging, foster families might need some time-out to enable them to re-charge their

batteries. Support carers provide such breaks where it is seen as helping to keep the placement stable, whether it's for a few hours, a day or a number of days.

Support care is also offered to children/young people from the community where the family are in crisis or where there are relationship difficulties. Support could be a day, or up to 14 days to enable a particular set of family circumstances or problems to be addressed and hopefully resolved.

A lifetime

If you become a permanent foster carer, a child will become part of your family until they grow up. All children require stability in their lives as they grow towards adulthood and independence. Some children are unable to do this within their own family. Not all children want to be adopted, especially older children or those who continue to have regular contact with relatives. Often children requiring a permanent home are aged between 8-14 years old. Some will be with brothers or sisters, others will be placed on their own.

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What support do we offer?

We want to make fostering every bit as rewarding and fulfilling for our carers as it is for children, which is why we provide all the support that we do.

- Foster carers are paid a weekly allowance to cover all the costs of caring for a child
- Additional payments are made to cover holidays, birthdays and Christmas
- On top of the allowance for fostering a child, you will get a payment in line with your skills and development as a foster carer
- A range of training opportunities including online training, distance learning and an opportunity to take a qualification in caring for children
- Access to local foster carer support groups
- A quarterly magazine with lots of information, events and activities
- Advice and support on a variety of health issues
- Membership to a national fostering organisation, The Fostering Network, who support foster carers and help improve the lives of children in care
- As a foster carer with us you will be entitled to discounts in a number of shops and leisure venues across Northamptonshire
- Support for your own children
- Support from the start from an experienced foster carer who can provide practical advice and insight into the role as well as a fostering social worker to work alongside you



You will be provided with access to local groups and teams who can offer you advice and support from the start

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What happens next?

Open Evening

You can attend one of our open evenings where you can find out more about fostering with Northamptonshire County Council. There will be opportunities to talk to experienced foster carers, social workers and see details of children needing your support. Please visit our website for further information.

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/adoptionfostering

Initial Assessment Visit

If we agree that it is right to go to the next step we will arrange a visit with you/your partner in your home to discuss your personal circumstances. During this visit we will discuss your enquiry in detail and there will be an opportunity to ask further questions.

Preparation Training

To help you develop your skills and knowledge to become a competent foster carer you will attend training. The preparation training is based on adult learning methods and consists of a mixture of presentations and group discussions, which draw on personal experience. Put formal teaching to the back of your minds and don't even think about exams!

Assessment

After the preparation training you will be allocated a social worker who will undertake an assessment.

The assessment process is a way of finding out about your potential as a foster carer. Children and young people who are fostered are very vulnerable and we have to make sure that the people who look after them will keep them safe.

The assessment process will help us and yourselves to decide which children/young people you may be able to care for. Your assessing social worker will need to get to know a lot about you and the members of your household. We aim to complete your assessment within 16 weeks.

Following your assessment a report will be presented to our fostering panel that will consider your application.

Approval

Once you have been approved as a foster carer you will be looking forward to welcoming a child into your home whether this is for a month, a year of a lifetime.

Thanks for your interest in becoming a foster carer. We have tried to answer your questions in this booklet but please contact us if there is anything else you would like to talk about. We look forward to hearing from you!

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This information can be provided in other languages and formats upon request.
Please contact 0300 126 1000.

To discover what difference you could make please contact us on:



0300 126 1009

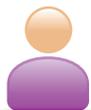


email: a&f@northamptonshire.gov.uk
web: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/adoptionfostering



Adoption & Fostering Recruitment Team
P.O. Box No. 225
John Dryden House
Northampton
NN4 7DF

OR



Northamptonshire
County Council