

Your parents are thinking about fostering?

Information for teenage children of prospective foster carers



What is fostering?

Fostering is when a family looks after a child or young person while they are unable to live with their own parents. This can be for a few days or months or sometimes a few years until they can live on their own as adults.

Fostering involves the **whole family**, children living at home, adult children who have left home, extended family, aunts, uncles, family friends and neighbours. Even though it is the adults who are responsible for caring for the children that are in foster care you can make a big difference by making children feel welcome - sometimes it is easier for children to speak to other young people.

Why do children need foster care?

There are a lot of different reasons why children are in foster care, it might be because their parents are ill. It might be because they have not been looked after properly or they may have been hurt in the past. Being fostered can be worrying for children, moving away from their family and living with people who they have never met before.

What happens next?

At the start of the fostering process your family will be visited by a member of the fostering team and you will be asked how you feel about your parents fostering. It's important that you feel involved in discussions and decisions about your family starting to foster. If you are worried or don't understand anything speak to your parents or a member of the fostering team because fostering has to be the right decision for all the family, including you.

Your parents will have videos to watch, things to read and foster carers will tell them about some of the children and young people they have looked after. You will also be invited to some Skills to Foster training sessions so that you will be aware of how fostering may affect your family.

Jack is 16, his family foster and he's helped answer some of the questions you might have.

I'm worried about the children that may come to live with us?

People often think that children in care are 'naughty' children who might behave badly, this is not the case. Children in care come from all walks of life and have different needs and experiences like all children. They are in care through no fault of their own, but because of the circumstances at home. Some children who have had a difficult start in life can seem younger than you would expect and some things trigger bad memories. If they are anxious or their behaviour towards members of your family worries you, remember that they do not mean to upset you. The need your patience and understanding to help them understand and deal with what has happened to them previously.

"Fostering has helped me realise that there is a lot going on that we don't know about but we can help change it. Sometimes it's really hard work because my brothers can be very annoying and take up a lot of time, but as long as mum keeps talking to me then it's ok. Extra treats are also good for putting up with some of the behaviour and making things ok!"

Will a lot have to change?

You will foster too when a child or young person come to live in your home. The main thing is to understand the changes which may need to be made at home are to protect the foster child and your family.

"When we started fostering it felt weird, sharing my family and friends with kids I didn't know, people from fostering coming into our home checking everything was ok. Now I don't feel like its fostering, it's normal, right. They are my brothers, we are family. Bit weird, but good."

How will I be involved?

You will have to get used to sharing your parents and their time. Children in foster care will need your help to feel welcome, to fit in, to find out about what it's like being in your family. You can often have a very positive effect for children in care and act as a role model and a calming influence.

"I think fostering is about trying your best to help kids who are struggling, paperwork and other stuff is for our parent/s and fostering to deal with."

Will we be safe?

This is a concern many young people voice when their families are considering fostering. We would never put foster carers or their own children at unnecessary risk.

"Foster children's real parents - what if they don't like us, how will they feel about us looking after their kids. What if they come to our house?"

Birth parents usually want to work with foster carers for the good of their children. It is rare for birth parents to go to foster carers' homes.

Talk about it

It's really important you feel able to talk to your parents or the fostering service about any concerns you have. It's ok to say if you're not happy - sometimes things don't work out, but you shouldn't worry that it's your fault. Your fostering service will have regular support groups for Sons and Daughters of Foster Carers where you can meet other children / young people experiencing being part of a foster family.

"If you're scared or worried, talk to your family and people from fostering - you have to make sure it's going to be ok. Talk to someone and get some help."



At home with Fostering

Further information

Further information and advice is available from The Fostering Network at www.fostering.net or British Association for Adoption & Fostering at www.baaf.org.uk

Foster carers, their children and families were consulted and assisted with the content of this leaflet.

This resource was financed by the Department for Education and has been produced by a consortium of the following Local Authority and Independent Fostering Agencies:

Barnardo's, Blackpool Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Foster Care Associates, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, Trafford Council, Warrington Borough Council, Wirral Borough Council