



If you would like to know more about fostering, we would love to hear from you. You can contact us and find out more about our recruitment events.

01782 234555

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## STOKE-ON-TRENT FOSTERING

“THE MOST REWARDING  
THING ABOUT FOSTERING  
IS MAKING A POSITIVE  
DIFFERENCE TO THE  
CHILDREN THAT WE  
LOOK AFTER, SEEING  
THEM THRIVE BOTH AT  
HOME AND IN SCHOOL  
AND GAIN IN CONFIDENCE.”

Stephen Russell  
Stoke-on-Trent Foster Carer



City of  
Stoke-on-Trent

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# STOKE-ON-TRENT FOSTERING INFORMATION PACK



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# STOKE-ON-TRENT FOSTERING

Thank you for your interest in fostering for Stoke-on-Trent City Council. We have put this information pack together to tell you more about the fostering process, and to hopefully answer some of your questions.

Children need to be within a healthy, loving and caring environment, so that they can enjoy life and achieve in their own communities.

We work with foster carers and other professionals to provide the very best outcomes for our children and young people.

Stoke-on-Trent Fostering recruits foster carers locally, regardless of race, disability, sexual orientation, gender or religion. Sometimes families are recruited from outside the area in order to meet the specific needs of our children.

We always want to improve the work we do, in order to improve the outcomes for our children. With the help of our team of committed foster carers we can make this happen.

**REMEMBER... THIS PACK IS ONLY THE START**

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**If you would like to know more, we would love to hear from you.**

Please contact our fostering recruitment team

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## UNDERSTANDING FOSTERING

Fostering involves caring for a child in your home, when they are unable to live with their birth family.

We need foster carers for children of all ages and backgrounds. Children benefit from living with families who share their own culture, language and religion. We need people who can foster children of different ages, from newborn to teenagers, and who can offer a home to a group of brothers and sisters.

We will help you decide what age of child would best suit your family, and whether having children for short periods or for longer lengths of time would fit in best with you and your lifestyle.

Whoever you foster, the fostering team will work with you to give you all the support and guidance you may need.

## CASE STUDY

### Short-Term Foster Carer

Jason is white British. He has two brothers aged 5 and 9 years old who have been removed from their parents' care because of long term neglect and abuse. Jason's mum has used heroin during her pregnancy and Jason had been born drug dependant.

A pre birth conference decided that the department would apply to the court to remove Jason from his parents care from birth, due to the level of concern over his safety and development.

Jason, may be in a hospital for a week or so, before being placed with foster carers. Things to consider about this placement:

- Foster carer may need additional information and support to care for a baby born drug dependent.
- Foster carer will need to visit Jason while he is in hospital both to start the bonding process and learn how to care for him.
- Jason will have frequent family time visits with his parents and may have family time with his brothers.
- The assessment and court process will take a maximum of 26 weeks to make permanent decisions about Jason's future.
- Jason may move onto adoption and the foster carers will be involved in working with the prospective adopters.

## CAN ANYONE FOSTER?

Anyone over 21 who has the ability to show commitment and care for a child or children, can apply to foster. I'm a big believer in doing something rather than sitting around talking about it

You can be;

- Married, single, or living with someone
- Male or female
- In a same sex relationship
- Working or unemployed
- From any cultural or religious background

You do not need to live in Stoke-on-Trent, but you do need to live close enough to maintain links with the children's birth family, schools, friends and community.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOSTERING

### Short-Term

This type of placement can last a few weeks, months or even longer whilst you, the child's birth family, and other professionals assess the child's long term placement needs.

### Long-Term/Permanent Care

When children and young people are fostered until they are ready to leave home and look after themselves.

### Respite

This will include short episodes of care for children, who need to spend brief periods of time away from their regular carers.

### Short Breaks

Short break foster carers provide regular respite care to help parents and their children who have disabilities or additional needs, to provide weekend and holiday care on a regular basis. This could include working with multiple families.

### Therapeutic (step down)

There are a number of children and young people who currently reside in residential settings and are ready to be fostered. They require a carer who has experience or skills of working with children or adults in a challenging environment.

### Remand

This is when young people are 'remanded' by the court, to the care of the local authority, who will identify specially trained foster carers for them.

### Emergency

Emergency foster carers provide a temporary home to children for one or two nights (often at the weekend) whilst a more suitable placement is being sought.

### Parent and Child

This is supporting a young parent to learn the skills to care for their baby whilst they are both residing in a foster placement. This can be for a short period of time or until plans are made for them to live independently when it is felt they are ready.



# THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Becoming a foster carer for Stoke-on-Trent City Council, normally takes between four and six months. If you decide to become a foster carer with us, the process will include;

## Information Meeting

If you have made an enquiry with us we will offer you a visit in your home if you want to discuss fostering further. We will discuss your personal circumstances and what you can offer. During this visit we will give you the opportunity to ask questions and learn about the range of children needing your support. We will also discuss the payment scheme that we offer. You will be left with a formal application to proceed with training and your assessment.

## Preparation Training (Skills to Foster)

To help you develop your skills and knowledge to become a competent foster carer you will need to 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. There will be no individual role play, and the course is designed to go at the pace of the applicants.

## 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.



## Approval

Following your assessment a report will be presented to our fostering panel who will consider your application. 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 or a lifetime.

## 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.

- A weekly allowance is paid 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 is offered.
- Support groups are available which are designed to target specific issues you want to talk about.
- You become a member of a national fostering organisation, The Fostering Network, who support foster carers independently from the local authority.
- Kidz of Carerz support group is there to help and support your birth children.
- Stoke-on-Trent Foster Carers Association is a local group providing support for local foster carers and is there to support you.



# MY STORY

## JESSICA, 16



I've been with my carers for 7 years. They have really helped me to pull through. We have our ups and downs but don't all families? I can't thank them enough for everything they have done for me.

School have started to notice a big change in my education. I have now completed my GCSEs and look forward to getting my results and moving onto college.

We go on many holidays we have been around the world, giving me experiences I never thought I would have. These holidays have given me a love of history, different languages and culture. If it wasn't for them then I would never have seen these amazing places and had so many different experiences.

They have always told me to speak out for myself so they encouraged me to get involved with the children in care council so I can raise my concerns, this has been a great opportunity. If it wasn't for these two amazing people then I wouldn't have been me, I would have been someone completely different.

There is so much I can say but I will be here for donkeys years writing this. I just want to say thank you to them for giving me the opportunities and everything you have done for me and with me over the last 7 years.

There are times when I can be tough but my carers have still tried to support me, even though I'd rather not have listened to their opinions.

I look forward to staying on through my education and allowing them to support me through to my independence.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Do I need a spare bedroom?

Ideally, you should have a spare bedroom as all children and young people need some space to call their own. However, children under two years of age can share a bedroom with the foster carer. Sibling groups can share a room, where this is appropriate. Fostered children are not able to share a room with your own children.

### Will I have to give up work?

This depends on what type of fostering you can offer, and how flexible your employer is. Some foster carers are able to continue with their employment, as long as they are able to meet the needs of the fostered children.

### Will I receive financial support?

Foster carers receive a weekly allowance for every child who lives with them. This is paid directly to the foster carers. In addition, foster carers receive a payment for their services, which can increase with experience, training and development.

### Can I foster if I smoke?

We want our children and young people to be as healthy as possible, so we follow Government guidelines in relation to smoking. This includes an expectation that you and your guests will not smoke in your home. You would not be able to foster children under the age of five if you are a smoker.

### Can I take a foster child out of the country for holidays?

Yes. We want to promote opportunities for children, in order for them to experience a loving and secure family environment. Holidays are part of this, and provide consistency of care. Arrangements for this would need to be discussed in advance with the child's social worker.



# POINTS TO REMEMBER

## DBS CHECKS

Checks will be completed on all members of your household.

## TRAINING

Times and dates are varied to fit in with your current circumstances i.e employment.

## MEDICAL

Don't worry if you have health issues. These won't automatically exclude you.

## YOUR CHILDREN

We will want to talk to any children you have, including adult children.

## REFERENCES

You will need to provide 3 personal references if you are a couple or 2 if you are a single applicant, as well as a reference from your employer if you work.

## EX-PARTNER

We will contact ex-partners, particularly those whom you have parented children with.

## HOUSING

You don't need to own your own home, but if you rent, you will need to obtain permission from your landlord.

“

I got involved in providing short break care because I wanted to give something back. I don't have children myself, but have worked with disability organisations that support children. I was able to provide respite care once a month, which fitted in with my full time work.

I'm a big believer in doing something rather than sitting around talking about it. I was given a lot of support and training, and the children have families that are nearby, which is a good reassurance. The supervising social worker and support network is excellent.

I would encourage other people to become short break carers. It is also an opportunity to have fun and experience things that you wouldn't normally do as an adult - for example we had days out at the monkey forest, or played in streams. The satisfaction of being able to contribute to a child's life is amazing.”

”



Short breaks foster carer

## ONE OF THE JOYS OF FOSTERING IS GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE THE LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT WE SIMPLY TOOK FOR GRANTED

