



Foster Care Fortnight 2019: 13-26 May

Media Pack

About Foster Care Fortnight™

Foster Care Fortnight™ is the UK's biggest foster care awareness raising campaign, delivered by leading fostering charity, The Fostering Network. Established for almost 20 years, the campaign showcases the commitment, passion and dedication of foster carers. It also supports fostering services to highlight the need for more foster carers. Thousands of new foster families are needed every year to care for children, with the greatest need being for foster carers for older children, sibling groups, disabled children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Foster Care Fortnight 2019 – #changeafuture

We believe that foster care changes futures - the futures of fostered children and young people and the futures of the foster families who care for them.

Have you ever had a moment in your life which you can look back on and see that your future changed at that time? Perhaps it was a teacher telling you that you were really good at something that is now your career? Or a relationship which led you to move? Or a trip overseas which gave you a different outlook on life? What was your moment? Fostering has the potential to be life-changing for fostered children and young people – it can #changeafuture.

This Foster Care Fortnight we want you to know that fostering is about changing futures. And, if you think you have the relevant skills and experience, we're calling on you to consider becoming foster carers so that you can also #changeafuture.

Find out more at thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/fcf19

About The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice. We work to ensure all fostered children and young people experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

Find out more at thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Contact The Fostering Network

We are able to provide some case studies of foster carers who can talk about how fostering can change futures. If you require a local case study then please contact your local fostering services.

We can also provide spokespeople from The Fostering Network who are able to talk about Foster Care Fortnight, the need for more foster carers and the power of fostering to change futures.

The Fostering Network's media team is available at media@fostering.net or 020 7620 6441. You can also find us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

About fostering

Every 20 minutes another child comes into care needing a foster family in the UK. Every day there are about 65,000 children living with 55,000 foster families.

Fostering offers children and young people a home when they are unable to live with their birth family. Sometimes children only stay with a foster family for a few days, while others will live with their foster family for their entire childhood and beyond. Many of these children have experienced abuse or neglect prior to coming into care. Fostering is often their first positive experience of family life.

Despite the trauma experienced by children coming into care and their difficult start to life, good foster care can help to transform their lives and enable them to flourish. Fostering offers children a safe and caring home and plays a big part in supporting them to maintain links with their birth family.

There is a need for thousands more foster carers every year. Foster carers come from a variety of backgrounds and bring a wide range of life and work experiences with them. They work as part of a team of professionals and receive training to develop the skills required to meet the needs of children in their care. Alongside this professionalism, they offer children love, warmth and stability.

The Fostering Network works to make foster care the very best it can be for fostered children and the families that care for them.

Types of fostering

There are many different types of fostering that foster carers can choose. All come with challenges and rewards, and the more people learn about fostering the more they realise which type of fostering they and their family would be most suited to.

Foster carers are usually approved to look after children for certain lengths of time. They will also often specialise in looking after children of certain ages, gender and ethnicity, and children with specific specialist needs.

Emergency

Emergency foster carers need to be prepared to take a child into their home at short notice, at any time of the day or night. Children will usually need to stay for only a few days, while longer-term plans are being considered.

Short-term

This can mean anything from overnight stays to a period of several months. Short-term foster carers provide a temporary place to stay until the child can return home to their own family or a longer-term fostering or adoption arrangement can be made.

Long-term

Long-term fostering allows children to stay in a family where they can feel secure, while maintaining contact with their birth family. There is a particular need for this type of foster care for teenagers and sibling groups.

Short-break

This covers a variety of part-time care, including offering a break to the family of a child with disabilities or for a foster family. A child could come and stay for anything from a few hours each week to a couple of weekends each month.

Specialist schemes

There is a wide range of specialist schemes which focus on working with children with particular needs. These include parent and baby placements, therapeutic foster care, fostering young people on remand and support care. Offering support care to a child's family is aimed at preventing young people from entering the care system on a full-time basis. Foster carers offer part-time care to children so they and their family can have a break, before difficulties escalate to a point where they can no longer manage.

What does a foster carer do?

Foster carers provide children with their day-to-day care and much more. They may have to help these children come to terms with difficult or traumatic experiences. They will support children in their education, look after their health and promote social wellbeing. The role is varied and challenging, and also includes attending meetings, keeping records, managing behaviour and promoting contact with birth families.

Foster carers receive pre- and post-approval training and support to help them develop the skills needed to do this challenging and rewarding work.

What makes a good foster carer

Foster carers come from all backgrounds and bring a wide range of life and work experiences. They receive training and support to help them develop the skills to meet the needs of children in care.

Just as there is diversity in fostered children, foster carers need to come from a variety of backgrounds and have different life experiences, skills and qualities to help meet the needs of children and young people in foster care. There are, however, some common criteria that most fostering services are looking for:

- to be at least 21 years old (although by law you can apply to foster from 18)
- to have a spare bedroom big enough for a young person to live in
- to be a full-time resident in the UK or have leave to remain
- to be able to give the time to care for a child or young person, often on a full-time basis.

Crucially, any fostering service will want to know more about you. Do you want to work with children and young people who have often had difficult starts in life? Do you have the ability to support them, nurture them, communicate with them, advocate on their behalf and include them as part of your family? Are you willing to work as part of a team, develop your skills and qualities through training and learning and have the resilience to stay strong in times of difficulty?

Foster carer skills checklist

- Listening skills
Do you hear and understand what children and adults are saying to you?
- Confidence
Can you advocate positively for the children in your care?
- Resilience
Can you cope when times get tough? Do you have a good support network?

- Patience
Can you persevere even when you don't seem to be getting quick results?
- Stability
Do you have a welcoming home, and can you make children feel safe and secure?
- Team player
Can you share responsibility, work with others, and ask for help and support?
- Observational skills
Can you see what is really going on beneath the surface?
- Communications skills
Do you get on well with children? Can you speak for others?
- Sense of humour
Can you see the bright side of life?

Becoming a foster carer

The following is the typical process most people will go through on the road to becoming a foster carer. The assessment and approval process is, as expected, rigorous and can take around eight months.

- Visit couldyoufoster.org.uk to find your local fostering services.
- Contact those services so you can better understand what support, training and remuneration they offer.
- Once you have decided upon the service you would like to foster with, contact them to enquire and have an initial discussion about fostering and for the service to find out a little about you.
- Attend an information session and meet current foster carers. The fostering service may also offer for a member of their team to come out and visit you in your home to have a conversation about fostering.
- Complete an application form and a social worker will be assigned to begin a detailed assessment as to whether you are suitable, and for which type of fostering.
- Attend pre-approval training, usually The Skills to Foster™.
- Background checks and a range of interviews will be made on all applicants.
- Your assessor will then submit a full report to a fostering panel who will consider your suitability to foster. The fostering panel will make a recommendation about your approval to the fostering service.
- The 'agency decision maker' at the fostering service will then make a final decision about your approval.
- Sometimes a child can come to live with you as soon as you are approved as a foster carer. However, sometimes it can take a while for a child to arrive. It is important that your fostering service makes sure that you are the right foster carer to look after a particular child or children. Making a good match is essential for a successful fostering placement.

- Throughout your career as a foster carer, you will receive support and supervision from your fostering service as well as the opportunity of ongoing learning and development. The fostering service will review your approval to foster annually.

Fostering myth-busters

(See thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/could-you-foster/can-i-foster-if)

- Most fostering services will accept applicants aged 21 or over.
- There is also no official upper age limit on being a foster carer.
- You can have a job outside of the home and still foster.
- Single people can foster.
- There are many gay and lesbian foster carers.
- You do not need to own your own home.
- You don't have to be a parent to foster.

Fostering statistics

In the UK, a child comes into care in need of a foster family every 20 minutes.

Over 65,000 children live with almost 55,000 foster families across the UK each day. This is nearly 80% of the 83,000 children in care away from home on any one day in the UK.

The statistics below provide a picture of the care system on just one day of the year. Around 30,000 more children come into care over the course of 12 months, with similar numbers leaving the care system to return home, move in with another family member, live with new adoptive families, become subject to a special guardianship or residence order or move on to adult life.

England

- 55,200 children were living with foster families on 31 March 2018.
- This is nearly four-fifths (78%) of the 70,720 children in care looked after away from home.
- There are around 43,500 foster families in England.

For more details see [statistics from the Department for Education](#) and [Ofsted](#).

Northern Ireland

- 2,334 children were living with foster families on 31 March 2017.
- This is nearly nine tenths (89%) of the 2,619 children in care looked after away from home.
- There are approximately 2,095 foster families in Northern Ireland.

For more details see the [Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety website](#).

Scotland

- 5,058 children were living with foster families on 31 July 2018.
- This is three-quarters (74%) of 6,817 children in care looked after away from home and family.
- There are approximately 4,000 foster families in Scotland.

For more details, see the [Scottish Government website](#).

Wales

- 4,434 children were living with foster families on 31 March 2017.
- This is nearly 90 per cent of the 5,109 children in care looked after away from home.
- There are approximately 3,700 foster families in Wales.

For more details see the [Welsh Government website](#).

Recruitment targets

Please note – these recruitment targets will be updated in May 2019 as part of Foster Care Fortnight™

Foster care provides children with a safe, secure and nurturing family environment, and allows them to keep in contact with their own families if they wish and if it is in their best interests.

With record numbers of children in care and a significant proportion of the foster carer workforce retiring or leaving every year, thousands more foster families are needed every year. There is a particular need for foster carers to look after teenagers and sibling groups.

Fostering services work all year round to find and recruit the foster carers they need locally to look after these children.

Numbers of foster families needed across the UK (estimate by The Fostering Network May 2018 – figures to be updated May 2019)

- **UK - 8,100**
- **England - 6,800**
 - North West – 1,240
 - North East – 450
 - Yorkshire and the Humber - 720
 - West Midlands - 890
 - East Midlands - 500
 - East of England - 610
 - London – 930
 - South West – 540
 - South East - 920
- **Northern Ireland - 200**
- **Scotland - 550**

- **Wales - 550**

Why do we need more foster carers?

Over the last decade across the UK more and more children have been coming into care.

As the vast majority of children in care live with foster families, thousands of new foster carers are needed every year in order to replace those foster carers who are stopping fostering and to grow the pool of foster carers so that children and young people coming into care are able to live with a foster carer whose skills and experience meet the child's individual needs.

There is a particular need for foster carers to come forward to foster teenagers, sibling groups and children with complex needs.

Without more people coming forward to foster children have to live with a foster family a long way from their home, are split up from their brothers and sisters, or may have to move from family to family and school to school.

A wider pool of foster carers with the right skills and qualities would make it more likely that the right homes can be found for children, giving them the best chance of a happy and stable childhood and a successful future.

Foster carers come from a wide range of backgrounds and professions, but what unites them all is a desire and ability to help and support children and young people in care to fulfil their potential.