

## **Fosterline Wales Factsheet**

### **The sons and daughters of foster carers**

#### **Introduction**

Fostering involves the whole family and it can have a positive impact on everyone in the household. The sons and daughters of foster carers play a vital role of welcoming fostered children into their home, so it is important to recognise and respect their essential contribution to fostering.

Sons and daughters of foster carers are first and foremost children. They need support and nurture from their parents, just like children in a non-fostering family. Unlike children in a non-fostering family, they share their parents, their home and wider family life with children who may come and go. It is never appropriate to place adult expectations or responsibilities on children and young people.

The Fostering Network believes that the sons and daughters of foster carers should be properly valued and recognised for the role that they play in fostering; that they should be consulted and involved in decisions which affect them; and they should be provided with the appropriate support services which promote their mental and physical wellbeing. When a positive and appropriate framework of support is in place for sons and daughters of foster carers, placements are more successful and less likely to break down.

#### **Fostering is a family affair**

Becoming a foster carer will have a huge impact on everyone living at home and everyone in the household needs to be committed to fostering.

Assessment and pre-approval training should involve the whole family, not just the parents. While fostering, decisions about placements need to be family decisions. Where sons and daughters are part of making decisions there is more chance of the placement being successful.

Many fostering services have their own support groups and provide sons and daughters with training and advice.

#### **The challenges and dilemmas often faced by sons and daughters**

Fostering can be very rewarding and positive for sons and daughters. However, it can also be challenging on a number of fronts.

#### **Coping with difficult and challenging behaviour**

Sons and daughters have to share their parents, their toys and their friends, as well as sometimes cope with difficult and challenging behaviour. Despite these

difficulties, many say that being part of a foster family has had a positive impact on them, and helped them to understand others better.

Sons and daughters have told us:

'He breaks my stuff'

'She hides food and can't use the toilet. Sometimes she makes my mum cry'

'If I behaved like that I'd get punished. It's not fair'

'He hurts me'

'They tell me stuff that makes me uncomfortable or scared'

'She said I'd hurt her'

Talking to your children to help them understand why a child has come to live with you, and why they need your support, will help. You can:

- Help them understand enough of the child's background to make sense of their behaviour and why you react differently to that child's behaviour than your son or daughter's behaviour.
- Set ground rules, such as keeping anything important to you in your bedroom and no-one being allowed to go into someone else's bedroom unless given permission.
- Never accept risks or harm that would be unacceptable for children in a non-fostering family. Speak immediately to your social worker if you have concerns.
- Make sure sons and daughters have an adult outside the family they can talk to. Owing to confidentiality, agree this in advance with the fostering agency.
- Agree a 'story' for times your son or daughter has to answer questions from people outside of the family about children coming and going.
- Be aware that allegations can be made against sons and daughters, not just their parents. Have a support strategy in place in case this occurs.
- Read Chapter 11: What about Us? in the Book [Safer Caring](#) published by The Fostering Network. This chapter focuses on fostering and safer care from the important perspective of sons and daughters of foster carers.

## **Family life and relationship with parents**

Sons and daughters have told us:

'He gets all the attention'

'I don't know what to say when friends ask questions'

'I hate the safer caring rules. It stops us being a normal family'

'It's too noisy to do homework, and no-one has time to help me'

You can:

- Recognise their effort. Think about giving them a certificate, thank you note or extra pocket money to recognise the things which a child in a non-fostering family wouldn't be expected to do.
- Protect time with each son or daughter to do things alone. This can be done most easily when a fostered child has contact, has gone to bed or is doing

activities. It is also good to set aside a few minutes each day for personal time with each child in the household.

- Explain why each of the safe caring rules is important. Ask what the son or daughter misses most (for example, story time in bed), and discuss ways to change that while keeping everyone safe.

## **How social workers and fostering agencies can support sons and daughters**

Sons and daughters tell us:

‘When the social worker comes, I have to go upstairs’

‘The social worker always comes when I’m having tea or time with my parents’

‘I came home and found adopters in our house. That was the first I knew that he was being adopted’

‘We were her first real family. I’m scared for her and upset at the idea of not seeing her again’

Fostering services need to recognise the crucial role of sons and daughters in the fostering assignment, acknowledge the impact and offer support. The mental health and wellbeing of sons and daughters is of equal importance to that of fostered children. It will help if you:

- [Give certificates and thank you notes to sons and daughters to recognise ways they have contributed to fostering.](#)
- Think about sons and daughters’ routines when you plan visits or arrange meetings.
- Every October The Fostering Network runs Sons and Daughters Month: Celebrating the Foster Family, a UK-wide campaign to celebrate the significant contribution of children of foster carers to successful foster care. [Find out more here.](#)
- Consider setting up a peer support group . Attending peer support groups enables them to gain emotional support, make friends, and take part in a number of activities where they have fun or learn new things. Peer support groups for sons and daughters of foster carers can provide a comfortable and safe environment to discuss fostering issues. For more details about how you can do this email [maria.boffey@fostering.net](mailto:maria.boffey@fostering.net).
- Make time to see the sons and daughters on their own. Use the time to check how they are finding a placement and to identify any concerns they may have.
- If you send birthday and christmas cards to the fostered child, send them to the sons and daughters as well.
- Use The Fostering Network’s resources to run pre-approval training for sons and daughters, and to include them in the family assessment.
- Remember sons and daughters need as much protection and have as many rights as fostered children.
- Include sons and daughters in plans for the fostered child’s future. Support them to make sense when a child leaves their family, either as a planned move or in a placement breakdown. Show the family how to make memory boxes and photo albums. Help the family think of ways to make good endings.

## Key messages

1. Forgetting about sons and daughters can lead to placement breakdowns, families stopping fostering and long-term difficulties for the sons and daughters.
2. Find ways to recognise and celebrate the role of sons and daughters within the foster family.
3. Key to addressing any challenge is good communication.
  - For children, keep a diary or write down the good and bad things about being a son or daughter in a family that fosters. Showing it to your parents will help them understand how fostering affects you. This will help them make changes to address things you find hard.
  - For parents, prioritise and protect time with your son or daughter. Recognise their role in making a fostered child a part of your family. Listen to them and take seriously any challenges that fostering may bring them.
  - For social workers and fostering agencies, continually remind yourself that fostering is a family activity. Keep the needs of the whole fostering family at the front of your mind. Communicate with the parents, and also with the sons and daughters.
4. Consider the specific needs of the sons and daughters of kinship carers, regardless of whether they are approved foster carers or not. While some of the some issues will be similar, there are significant differences for sons and daughters of kinship carers who may, for instance, have a cousin come to live with them, as opposed to a stranger. These differences are addressed in the factsheet about Kinship Foster Care.

## Further Resources

The Fostering Network provides extensive resources for the whole family.

### **For sons and daughters and/or parents and/or social workers:**

Don't you forget about me: a [guide](#) to developing a peer support group for the sons and daughters of foster carers.

[The Skills to Foster, Session Seven.](#) This is pre-approval training for sons and daughters This session provides specialist materials to use with sons and daughters. The new version includes references to social media in the different activities and it encourages sons and daughters to consider their own experiences in relation to those of fostered children and young people. It offers more flexibility about how and when to deliver the activities and also highlights issues and activities for sons and daughters to 'take home' and discuss with their parent/s.

**Sons and Daughters Month: Celebrating the Foster Family.** This takes place in October. Members of The Fostering Network can download resources like thank you letters and certificates

[thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/championing-fostering/sons-and-daughters-month](http://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/championing-fostering/sons-and-daughters-month)

**For parents and/or social workers:**

[Dylan's Story](#): What's it like to be the son or daughter of a foster carer? Steve Killick and Maria Boffey, The Fostering Network, 2013.

**How The Fostering Network can help**

The Fostering Network offers advice, information and support. Our expertise and knowledge are always up-to-date and available through our vital member helplines, publications, training and consultancy.

**Advice**

Fosterline Wales

Call us on 0800 316 7664 from 9.30am - 12.30pm Monday to Friday.

If you call outside this time please leave a message and someone will call you back as soon as possible.

You can email us or write to us at:

[Fosterlinewales@fostering.net](mailto:Fosterlinewales@fostering.net)

The Fostering Network Wales

1 Caspian Point, Pierhead Street

Cardiff Bay CF10 4DQ

**Support and resources**

Our website is an essential source of information, while our online community brings together foster carers for peer support and advice. You can login to share your experience and get advice from other foster carers. Our online community is a safe and secure area to discuss foster care matters.

[thefosteringnetwork.org.uk](http://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk)

**Training and consultancy**

Wherever you are in your fostering career, as a foster carer, social worker or manager, The Fostering Network has a range of training designed to meet your development needs.

For more information contact our learning and development manager, Sarah Mobedji at [sarah.mobedji@fostering.net](mailto:sarah.mobedji@fostering.net).

**About The Fostering Network**

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children to make foster care the very best it can be.

## Contact

To find out more about our work in Wales, please contact:  
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