Becoming a foster carer with Liverpool City Council

could be the difference

fostering.liverpool.gov.uk

foster a future
Welcome note

Thank you for your interest in becoming a foster carer with Liverpool City Council.

We currently have more than 1300 looked after children in Liverpool and we’re looking for more local authority foster carers to care for our children and make a real difference to their future. By working together, we can help to bring stability and continuity to local children’s lives, and really make a difference to their future.

We hope this booklet gives you an insight into what it means to be a foster carer with Liverpool City Council, the difference you can make, and how you’ll be supported if you decide to proceed with a rewarding, challenging, and inspiring carer as a foster carer!

We understand that becoming a foster carer isn’t a quick decision, so if you have any questions or would like to talk more to our friendly team about the next steps, please contact us on the details below.

Yours sincerely,

The Fostering Team

fostering.liverpool.gov.uk
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Having someone who was there for me every single day, allowed me to see my future

Bianca
What does it mean to be a foster carer?

Being a foster carer means caring for a child or children when they cannot be cared for by their own family. When a child comes into care, it is always because of issues outside of their control. It is never their fault or responsibility, and they just need a safe and secure home, with caring adults, who want to make a positive impact on their lives and future.

Fostering is not always easy and can be demanding and challenging, but it can also be great fun and extremely rewarding. Some children have special needs which require additional support, other children may have suffered abuse, neglect or been caught in the centre of a family crisis. If you become a foster carer, you’ll be joining a team of professionals who all work together to achieve the best possible future for a child.

Some of the typical day-to-day tasks include taking them to and from nursery, school or college, being the child’s advocate, attending meetings, promoting their health and wellbeing, updating and sharing information about their development, encouraging their social development and willingness to try new things.

By working together we can help to bring stability and continuity to these children’s lives. Foster children need homes for different reasons and whatever their past experiences, we will provide you with all the necessary specialist support and guidance you could need to help rewrite their story...towards a better future.

If you are over 21, have a spare room and are able to offer love, support and guidance to a young person, we’d love to have a chat with you.

Being consistent in our approach we’ve seen a definite change in the behaviour of the children we look after. They now have the confidence, self-esteem and self-worth to aspire and fulfil their dreams.

Paula, Foster Carer
What makes a good foster carer?

We often speak to people who are interested in fostering, but think they won’t be considered for a whole host of reasons that are simply not true. We are genuinely looking for people from all walks of life, with different backgrounds. You can be single, married or LGBTQI+

Types of fostering - Becoming a permanent carer for a child or young person will essentially mean they become part of your family.

The most important attribute of a foster carer is your ability to love and care for a child, as well as having the desire and capacity to make a difference to a child's future.

- **A kind and caring nature** maybe the most valuable trait of a foster carer. Providing love and attention that may have been missing in a child’s life, is key to building trust and strong relationships. By **listening** and using **empathy** to see things from the child’s point of view, they are shown that their views and opinions are valued, which will build their confidence, self-worth and eventually independence.

- **A sense of humour** is so important in creating a happy and welcoming environment for children. Being able to laugh together, helps to break down communication barriers and helps children feel safe. What could be more rewarding than bringing fun, happiness and adventure into a child’s life?

- Being a foster carer can be challenging and sometimes it takes time to see the results of your hard work and commitment. Being **patient and consistent**, will bring rewards and a sense of satisfaction that will far outweigh the tough times.

- Being **flexible and organised** is key to managing the different elements of being a foster carer, including; keeping a daily log of activities, instilling routines and boundaries, attending meetings with social workers and other care professionals, contact visits with the child’s family and continuously learning, developing your skills and reflecting on your experiences.

- Foster carers really make a difference in a child’s life by being their **advocate** and speaking out on their behalf. This along with managing challenging behaviors and saying goodbye when they move on all require **resilience and a certain strength of character**.
We need homes for children of all ages up to 18 years. There are babies and toddlers, teenagers, and sometimes siblings who need to stay together. There are children with special needs who may have physical disabilities or learning difficulties and need special care. There are also children from different backgrounds may have special requirements and have particular cultural or religious needs which need to be met.

There is a huge variety and diversity in the children and young people who need a safe and loving home, so we want to continue to build our fostering family with foster carers from diverse backgrounds.

The two main types of foster carer are short term and long term or permanent care. Short term care can involve looking after a child on an emergency basis for as short as an overnight stay, or for a few months, before they return home or move onto a more permanent home. Becoming a permanent carer for a child or young person essentially means they become part of your family until they reach independence, but unlike adoption the legal powers regarding the child or young person will remain with the local authority.

Respite care involves looking after children on a short term basis, who are already placed with foster carers to give ‘respite’ or a short break to their carers, and Short breaks care helps to relieve the pressure on parents and families caring for children with disabilities or health conditions. These types of care are planned in advance and are more suited to someone who would like to foster, but is unable to commit to a long term placement due to limited free time.
Becoming a foster carer

On average it takes 6-12 months to complete the following steps to becoming a foster carer with us, and we'll support you every step of the way!

1. Enquiry and Expression of Interest
When you decide to take the first step and speak to us about fostering, our friendly team will answer any questions you have, and ask you a few initial questions about your current situation and your interest in fostering.

2. Initial Home Visit Assessment
We’ll come and visit to get to know more about you, your home, and thoughts about fostering. We’ll talk in more depth about fostering and what’s involved, and provide all the information you need to decide if you’d like to pursue a career in fostering.

3. Skills to foster training
A really informative, engaging and inspiring 3 day pre-approval training course, which gives you an insight into what being a foster carer and child in care is like. It is a good opportunity to meet other people going through the application process and gain a detailed insight into fostering, in a supportive group environment.

4. Application pack and assessment
At this stage you will meet your assessing social worker, who will review the information gathered so far in the process. If all parties are agreed that the time is right for you to foster, we will invite you to complete an application form. As part of the assessment you will have a number of home visits, where we will talk more about your life experiences, past relationships, work history, interests etc.. Friends and family members will also be contacted at this point. We will also complete all the necessary police and medical checks and obtain references.

5. Panel review
You’ll be sent a copy of your assessment report in advance of attending a panel review. This is where a group of fostering professionals review and discuss the report with you, and will make a recommendation regarding your approval as a foster carer.

6. Approval
Congratulations! Shortly after you are approved as a foster carer, you’ll receive a call with details of a child who needs a foster home. As part of the application process, we learn about the type of fostering that would suit your skills, experience, lifestyle, and any preferences you have in terms of a child’s age. These factors are taken into account as part of the matching process.

7. Matching with a foster child and your 1st placement
To help you develop your skills and knowledge as a foster carer, there is a comprehensive training programme that covers a variety of topics, as well as regular forums where you can meet and learn from other foster carers.
Why foster with us?

If you decide to pursue a rewarding career as a foster carer, we will support you every step of the way. We will provide you with all the necessary training, specialist support and guidance you need to rewrite a child’s story towards a better future.

- **Professional Support** – Our foster carers are assigned a dedicated supervising social worker and family support worker, who stay in regular contact to provide support and professional guidance. There is also access to a wider network of specialist partner services across the council.

- Access to a 24hr support line for help and advice, as well as free membership and a host of resources from two leading fostering charities; Fostering Network or Foster Talk.

   “The fostering service has backup from social workers and behaviour specialists, there’s lots of support out there. You don’t have to do it alone” (Alison, Foster carer)

- **Financial Support** - As a foster carer with Liverpool, you’ll receive a skills based professional fee, which increases as you gain experience and develop your skills. You’ll also receive an allowance per child to contribute towards day to day expenses, as well as mileage expenses and an initial set-up fee.

- **Our foster carers are also exempt from paying council tax**, along with many other benefits such as; free Lifestyles fitness centres membership, discount cards, and tickets to local events.
• **You are recognised as a professional** - “With Liverpool I am immediately treated as a professional part of a multi-agency team, which makes everything easier as you’re all working together as a cohesive team” (Linda, Foster Carer)

• **You will become part of a great fostering community** and enjoy the chance to meet and socialise with other foster families, at regular foster carer forums, social events such as a Christmas party and competitions to win tickets to the theatre and sporting events!

  “It’s nice to know that we are a part of a very, very big family called the fostering team” (Tony, Foster Carer)

• **A 3 bedroomed caravan** sited at Presthaven Beach Resort is available for our foster families to enjoy sometime away and create special memories for both the children and foster carers.
my foster carers taught me the life skills I needed to become independent.

Being fostered has completely turned my life around, I was given the opportunity to focus on myself which allowed me to become a person I’m proud of. Having someone who was always there for me every day, made me feel important and helped me realise my potential.

There’s always someone I can talk to... my foster carers are always on my side.

I love living with Linda because she is the best person in the entire world...she helped me and my sisters when we needed it the most, she is always ready to help us....I want to share every victory of my life with her.

I have been given amazing opportunities... I was able to go on a school trip for the first time.

could YOU be the difference?
What our foster carers say...

You’re either laughing or your crying, and that’s not the worst way to go through life
Phil, Foster Carer

I’ve gained a lot from my experiences as a foster carer, firstly from the children themselves – the interaction and seeing them progress gives you a great sense of satisfaction
Alison, Foster Carer

Having fostered teenagers, I have now changed my perception of teens in care. I now have an insight into the problems they face, and how much difference I can make by just giving them a chance to shine
Jackie, Foster Carer

They are among the most resilient and wonderful teenagers that I have ever had the pleasure of working with
Linda, Foster Carer
Thank you for interest in fostering with Liverpool City Council. If you’d like to find out more and take the next step, come to one of our information sessions or contact our friendly team today.

0151 515 0000

visit: fostering.liverpool.gov.uk