

Your family is thinking about fostering?

Information for extended family of prospective foster carers

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So your family is thinking about fostering, what will this mean to you?

As the extended family of prospective foster carers, we know how important it is to let you know what fostering is all about and how it may affect you as a family.

What is fostering?

Fostering is a role that involves the **whole family**, children living at home, adult children who have left home, extended family, aunts, uncles, family friends and neighbours. Fostering offers children and young people a safe, caring family home while they are unable to live at home. Children come into care for a variety of different reasons but unfortunately, the most common reason is abuse and neglect.

If a relative or family friend cannot be sought, the best alternative to living at home is foster care. This will be while social workers and other professionals work with the family to help try and make things safe for the child to return home. If it is in the child's best interests, social workers will always work towards this.

As a family member of a prospective foster carer, it's very important that you also know what fostering is all about to help you feel part of the process.



Some of the most common questions family ask at this time are detailed below.

How will it affect me?

As part of the assessment process, we will ask applicants about their extended family, what their involvement is, what their commitments are and what their family may feel about fostering. All this information will all carefully considered when fostering services are assessing applicants. You may be interviewed by an assessing social worker for your views or you may offer to be a referee.

We would not want fostering to be too unsettling to normal family life, but we do need to be sure that foster carers can make the adjustments needed for our children and that the whole family embraces children placed too.

What about the impact other children in the family?

Children are placed in care through no fault of their own. It is through circumstances at home having reached a point that it is no longer safe for a child to remain living with family. Becoming part of a fostering family can mean a lot of changes for children in the extended family. They will have to learn to share their aunts, uncles and their time. Some children may display difficult behaviour and it can be a shock for children. However, foster carers advise that fostering has positive effect on their children, allowing them greater empathy for others.

I'm worried about the children that may be placed?

People often think that children in care are 'naughty' children who may have lots of behavioural problems, this is not the case. Children in care come from all walks of life, backgrounds and cultures. They have different needs and experiences like all children. They are in care through no fault of their own but circumstances at home. They can be scared, experiencing separation, loss and uncertainty. Due to their experiences, they may have challenging behaviour – who wouldn't? We train our foster carers to look beyond this behaviour and understand the reasons behind it. Extended family can often have a very positive effect for children in care and act as a role model and a calming influence.

What about family holidays, parties etc.

Children in care can come along too! We want children in care to be part of normal family life so there is no reason why they cannot go on family holidays and attend family parties. For some children, this may be a new and exciting experience.



Talk about it

Talk to your family's fostering service about any worries you have. Your fostering service may be able to put you in touch with other fostering families who have been through the process.



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

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