



Liverpool  
City Council

# Becoming a foster carer for Liverpool

[fostering.liverpool.gov.uk](http://fostering.liverpool.gov.uk)

foster a future  
together we make a difference

# What is fostering?

**Fostering means caring for a child or children who are not your own. Liverpool foster carers look after children and young people who come into the Council's care for a wide variety of reasons.**

Fostering can involve caring for children for a very short time, such as an overnight stay, to just a few days or several months, and sometimes many years until they grow up and leave home to live independently.

Fostering provides help and support for children from a range of families. Fostering is not always easy. It can be demanding and stressful. It can also be great fun and extremely rewarding. Some children have special needs which require extra support. Other children may have suffered abuse or been caught in the centre of a family crisis. By becoming a foster carer you can give families the time to rebuild their lives.

Whilst fostering focuses on the needs of the individual child, the fostering team will also ensure that the foster carer and their family receive the support they need. By deciding to become a foster carer for Liverpool you will be making a positive contribution to a child's life.



# Who needs to be fostered?

## **Any child who cannot be cared for by their own family.**

We need homes for children of all ages up to 18 years. Sometimes as single children, sometimes for two or three brothers and sisters (occasionally even more) who need to stay together. There are children with special needs who may have physical disabilities and/or learning difficulties and need special care. There are babies and toddlers. There are teenagers and young mothers who also need a little extra support.

Children from different backgrounds may have special requirements and have particular cultural or religious needs which need to be met. Placing children with carers from their own cultural background is vital in order to provide a child with stability, continuity and a positive sense of identity.

Many will have experienced domestic crises, abuse, illness, addiction or neglect. By working together we can help to bring stability and continuity to these children's lives.

Foster children need homes for different reasons and whoever you decide to foster, Liverpool will be able to provide you with all the necessary specialist support & guidance you could need.



# How do foster children feel?

**Being away from your birth family is difficult. Especially for children who are too young to understand why their parents and familiar surroundings are suddenly gone. It's not easy, but good foster carers can make all the difference.**

Any child moving to live with strangers will be confused, bewildered, vulnerable and unsure of what is expected of them. They may have needs over and above those of other children. They may be angry, hurt and wary and may find it hard to trust. It is particularly tough for young children. For many the whole world revolves around the family. Sibling groups in particular may find it difficult to be separated from their brothers and sisters as well as the parents.

Foster carers make a difference to children's lives by providing care, security and a stable home life for children. They are vital in helping children to thrive and develop when living away from home.

When deciding on fostering it is important that all family members are consulted, their wishes taken into account and are supportive of any placement.



# Could I foster in Liverpool?

**Potentially anyone who has the ability to care and provide commitment to a child or children can foster, subject to the checks outlined later in the brochure.**

There is no such thing as a typical foster carer. He, she or they may be young or old. They may be married or single, gay or straight, employed or unemployed. What is important is that you can help and care for a child who requires love and attention. You also need to be patient, understanding, resilient and realistic. Having a sense of humour is an enormous bonus too!

Foster carers live in all kinds of homes. Terraced, semis, detached houses and flats. However, they will need enough space to provide a home for a foster child. Young children can share a room but older children ideally need to have a room of their own. Foster carers are encouraged to take children from their own ethnic and cultural backgrounds wherever possible. For children of dual heritage, we look for placements which most closely reflect the child's ethnic origins.

Whilst you do not necessarily need to have children of your own, you do need to understand their needs and have had experience of dealing with children



# What's it like to be a foster carer?

“ My wife suggested we investigate whether we could become foster carers just as I was turning 40. Our birth children were 6 and 8, and although we had busy lives, we all agreed to explore further. We went to an ‘information meeting’, where a foster carer and a young adult, who had grown up in foster homes, told their stories. The stories made me both laugh and cry. Fundamentally, I thought the job of a foster carer was to keep a child safe, and I was pretty sure we could do that. There was no sudden moment when the light bulb went on, no story that melted my heart, but I just thought ‘why not?’.

We went on three training days where we learnt about the role of a foster carer, and were regularly visited by a social worker who asked us to reflect on what we could bring to the role. Fostering is full of unknowns but if you’re happy to ask for help and advice, most problems can be overcome.

A year later, we were approved to look after children between the ages of 4 and 6 on a short term basis. 6 years later, we have fostered 5 separate children. We had one little lad for 4 hours, and one for over two years, and quite a few in between. Of course not every day is easy but I know I’m doing good and that is important to me. Fostering has brought my family closer together and I am very proud of how my birth children show patience, love and kindness to the children we look after.

Fostering has now become an integral part of who we are as a family, and I hope we will continue to foster as long as we can still do some good. ”



“

We were married with three young children. We had thought about fostering for some time. So we applied, 26 years ago we were approved to foster one child on a temporary basis. He stayed for 18 months, and then he moved on to a long term foster placement. Then we had a few babies pre adoption. After that we got a sibling group who stayed with us long term. Having grown up alongside our birth children. They are just like our own kids now. We have had our highs and lows . But would not have changed it for the world.

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There are different types of fostering and they include: :

- **Short term fostering** for children of all ages who will return to their parents within a few weeks or months. During this period the child usually still has contact with their parents.
- **Long term fostering** where foster carers provide a long term home for a child or children usually over 11 years of age, though occasionally younger, until they are ready to leave home and take care of themselves.
- **Respite fostering** is for short regular planned stays. Respite care with foster carers provides children with planned stays and gives their parents a break, which often helps them to cope.
- **Emergency fostering** is for children who need to be taken care of at short notice and often during unsociable hours.
- Where foster carers provide support and weekend respite to support children with disabilities and their family.
- **Family & friend fostering** - short or permanent foster care by people related to or previously known to a child.
- **Adoption** - provides a permanent home, the family name and total responsibility for the child or children you adopt.



# Can I afford to foster?

**As Liverpool City Council values the work undertaken by their carers and want their carers to enjoy fostering there is financial support, ongoing training, and allocated social worker and other support services.**

Carers receive an allowance for each child which covers everyday costs and in addition, a fee for time and skill devoted to the child. Allowances and the fee payment will be regularly received.

Please see Financial info slip at the back of this brochure for details of current payment rates.

Liverpool recognise the contribution made to its children by foster carers and pay a retainer of 8 weeks per year. To ensure that carers who look after children continuously throughout the year without a break do not suffer financially, carers will be paid the equivalent of 2 weeks fee to support a holiday.

In addition, carers can access an extensive range of after school clubs and activities for the children in their care (where needed). Also a professionals including, social and education workers, child psychologists and other child care professionals can be called upon to help you and the child.



# How do I apply to be a foster carer?

An initial training course is provided during the assessment period, which allows you to discover if you really want to become a foster carer. Once approved, foster carers are expected to attend training to gain and improve their skills in working with children and young people.

## You should

- be able to offer a child their own room
- enjoy being with children and young people
- be willing to keep developing your skills through regular training

## You shouldn't

- have a police record for violence or offences against children (convictions)
- Smoke. Children under 5 years of age will not be placed with foster carers who smoke.

Every foster carer in Liverpool has a specialist Supervising Social Worker to support them and provide regular feedback, supervision and guidance. They'll help to give you the knowledge and skills to make a difference. In addition, a support network is available and there are regular support group meetings. You will also work in partnership with other professionals, including teachers, youth workers and health workers.



# Applying to be a foster carer

When you apply to become a foster carer we have to carry out checks and take up references. We have to be thorough. Taking care of someone else's child is a great responsibility and we put great trust in you. As a first step, a social worker will visit you at home to discuss your interest in fostering. At this visit both you and your partner (if you have one) will need to be present.

You can then decide to take it further or you can drop out at any time. You (and your partner if applicable) will go on training courses, which will explain the details, the opportunities, problems and rewards of fostering. A social worker is allocated to you and will make regular visits to your house and prepare an assessment of you and your home situation. They will carry out checks and take up references and you will also require a medical check. In addition a Police check will be carried out on both you and anyone over 18 living in your home.

Assessments are then presented to the Fostering Panel for final approval. Once approved, you can then become a carer.

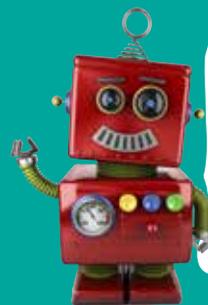


# So what are the next steps?

**Interested?** If you would like to know more about becoming a foster carer for Liverpool, we would love to hear from you.

Our team of specially trained staff will then ask you a number of questions to assess your initial suitability. All answers you provide will be treated in strict confidence.

We will then forward that questionnaire to one of our team of social workers who will come out and visit you to start the assessment process.





# Thank you...

...for your interest in Fostering with Liverpool City Council. We hope you have found this information brochure useful and it has helped you decide whether you want to continue your journey towards becoming a foster carer.

However, if you still have questions, doubts or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact our friendly team.

You can call us on **0151 515 0000**

or email enquiries **[enquire@fosteringforliverpool.co.uk](mailto:enquire@fosteringforliverpool.co.uk)**

You can also check out our upcoming events :



**Liverpool Council Fostering Service**

**[fostering.liverpool.gov.uk](http://fostering.liverpool.gov.uk)**

