



Liverpool
City Council

Becoming a **foster carer** with Liverpool

could
YOU
be the
difference



fostering.liverpool.gov.uk

foster a future

**When you strip
those labels away,
and look at our
core values and
what we enjoy
doing – those
things make us a
really good match**

Linda, Foster Carer



Welcome

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. 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 talk to you.

We hope this booklet gives you an insight into what it means to be a foster carer with Liverpool City Council, 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

0151 515 0000

enquire@fosteringforliverpool.co.uk



**If you're thinking
about fostering,
I'd say do it,
go for it...
just make a
call and find
out more. You
haven't lost
anything
and you might
gain a lot**

Alison, Foster Carer



What does it mean to be a foster carer?

Fostering means caring for a child or children when they cannot be cared for by their own family. When a child comes into the Council's 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.

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 rewrite their story... towards a better future.

What makes a good foster carer?

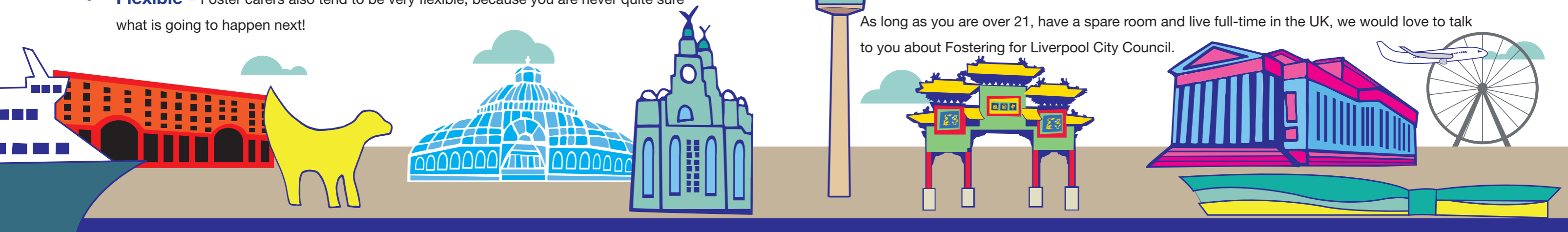
We often speak to people who are interested in fostering but think they won't be considered for a whole host of reasons that are simply not true. The most important attribute of a foster carer is your ability to love and care for a child, as well as having the desire and capacity to make a difference to a child's future.



It is a foster carer's character that makes them unique.

- **Empathy** – If you can see the situation from the child's point of view, understand and accept where they are coming from, it helps you understand some of their behaviors and how they are feeling.
- **Kindness** – a kind and caring nature maybe the most valuable trait of a foster carer. To provide the love and attention that may have been missing in a child's life, can be the key to building trust and strong relationships.
- **A Good Listener** – it's so important we listen to our children, hear what they have to say and show them their views and opinions are valued.
- **Flexible** - Foster carers also tend to be very flexible, because you are never quite sure what is going to happen next!

- **Resilient and Resourceful** – the ability to cope with challenging behaviors, saying goodbye to a child when they move on and seeking out support and help if you need it, all require a certain strength of character
- **Patience** – being a foster carer can be as challenging and testing, but if you can remain focused and be there to support a child unconditionally, the rewards will far outweigh the tough times.
- **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 get everyone through the tough times. What could be more rewarding than bringing fun, happiness and adventure back into childhood?
- **Confident** – A key part of a foster carer's role, is becoming the advocate for the child. By speaking on their behalf, you can help transform their future.
- **Organised** – The practical side of the role includes; 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.

As long as you are over 21, have a spare room and live full-time in the UK, we would love to talk to you about Fostering for Liverpool City Council.



 **My experience with Liverpool is that a good match is a priority. A good match is the secret to a good placement, it makes life easier from both the foster carer's point of view and also the children's** 

Types of fostering

We need homes for children of all ages up to 18 years. There are babies and toddlers, sometimes single children, sometimes for two or three brothers and sisters 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 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 having a child with you 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 will 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 and / or health conditions. These types of care are planned in advance and are more suited to anyone who would like to foster, but is unable to commit to a long term placement due to limited free time.

Becoming a foster carer

There are 8 steps on your journey to becoming a foster carer. On average it takes 6-12 months 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 plunge and speak to us about fostering, our friendly team will speak to you to find out a bit more about you and your interest in fostering. They will answer any questions you have and share the dates of our future events where you can find out more and meet some of our current foster carers.

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

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, you are now an approved foster carer!



7. Matching with a foster child and your 1st placement

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, and this is taken into account as part of the matching process.



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.

- **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)
- **Training and personal development** – with regular training courses across a wide range of topics, there are many opportunities to learn and develop your skills, which are reflected and rewarded with our skills based payment structure. "I feel more confident and knowledgeable to deal with situations" (Foster carer).
- **Professional support** – When you are approved as a foster carer with us, you are assigned a dedicated supervising social worker and family support worker to support you through your fostering journey. They will be in regular contact to provide support and professional guidance, and there is also access to a wider network of specialist partner services across the council, such as health, education and the Police.

 **It's nice to know that we are a part of a very, very big family called the fostering team** 

- **Skills based payments structure** - As a foster carer with Liverpool, you'll receive a skills based professional fee, which increases as you gain experience and attend training to develop your skills. You'll also receive an allowance per foster child to contribute towards day to day expenses. If you're currently a foster carer with an agency, we are able to match the financial package you're currently receiving.
- **Our foster carers are also exempt from paying council tax**, along with many other benefits such as free Lifestyles membership, discount cards, and mileage payments as we know bringing up children can be expensive!
- **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!

 **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

I have learnt what is important in life; education, my health and spending time with my friends

now I have the most beautiful little boy to teach everything my foster carers have taught me

my foster carers believed in me, when everyone wanted to give up

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

I now know I have a lot of people who care about me

it's the most rewarding job and you'll be changing young people's lives!

could
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be the
difference

my foster carers taught me the life skills I needed to become independent

my life has changed so much, from running away and placements breaking down to people I call my family looking out for me and treating me and my son like their own

Please don't give up... ride the storm with us and it'll be worth it in the end!

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

I feel content with my life, everything is going the way it should thanks to me foster carers believing in me

My foster carers still treat me like family....I go every Sunday for a roast

my confidence has grown...the only way is up from now on

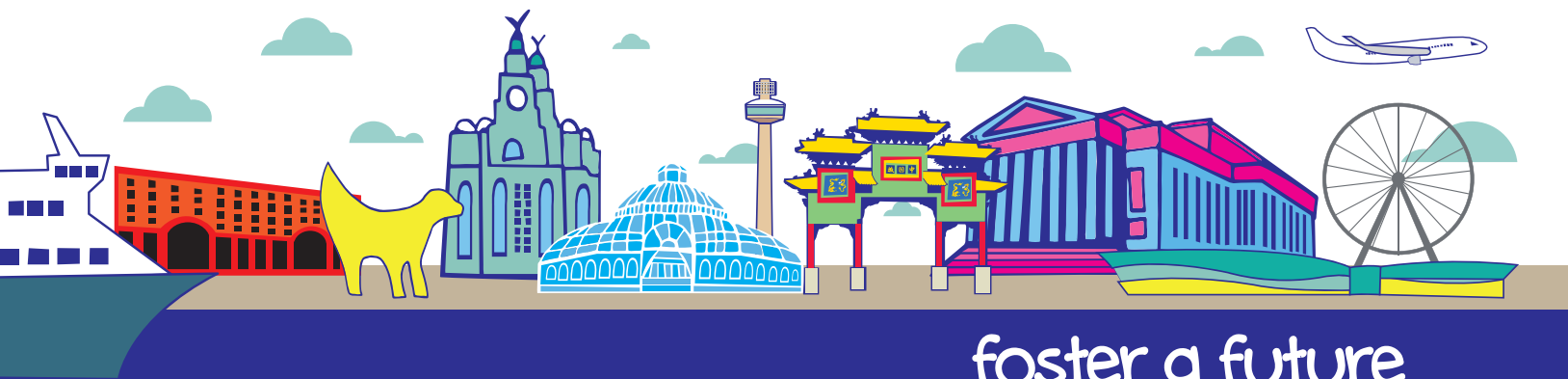


If you have the passion to make a difference to a young person's life, contact our friendly team on:

0151 515 0000

visit:

fostering.liverpool.gov.uk



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