

Change lives – foster for Derbyshire

Find out more about becoming a foster carer
with Derbyshire County Council

www.derbyshire.gov.uk/fostering
0800 083 77 44



Change lives

“Thank you for getting in touch with us about becoming a foster carer.

You’ve started on one of the most rewarding journeys you’ll ever make – and we’ll be with you every step of the way.

Looking after a child can be challenging at times and you’ll need patience, kindness and understanding. But becoming a foster carer can be one of the most rewarding and life-enriching events you and your family will ever experience.

We’ll be here to give you all the training and support you need as you become part of an amazing team of very special people who are changing lives for children in Derbyshire.

It’s one of the most amazing jobs you can do and we’ll support you with everything you need to do it.

I look forward to welcoming you to our team.”



**Councillor Alex Dale
Cabinet Member for Young People**



Foster for Derbyshire

Why foster for Derbyshire?

We're proud of the support, care and training we provide for our foster carers. You'll become a valuable member of our team and we'll do all we can to make your time with us as enjoyable as possible.

We offer our carers on-going support, advice and resources including:

- Your own social worker to guide and support you in your new role
- Your own experienced foster carer mentor and regular local support groups
- High quality, extensive and continuing training including health and safety and a three-day 'Skills to Foster' course
- Training specific to the child's needs and access to therapeutic services
- Membership of 'Foster Talk' – a not-for-profit organisation which offers independent advice and support
- The opportunity to be involved in developing the service
- Weekly fostering payments with additional allowances
- Skills allowance payments structure to support your personal development
- IT grant towards purchasing computer equipment for you and your family
- Free access to local leisure centres
- Fostering events and celebrations
- Regular bulletins, emails and texts to keep you in touch with what's going on including our newsletter at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/fostercarernews



Change lives

Fostering FAQs

You'll probably have lots of questions about whether or not you can foster. Here are some of the most commonly asked questions:

I'm not the right age

21 is the youngest age that we consider for fostering for Derbyshire but we don't have any upper age limits.

I don't own my own home

You don't need to own your own home to foster. If you're offering foster care to a child aged two or upwards you will need to have a spare bedroom. Your home needs to be in good condition and with a secure tenancy or ownership.

I'm single

Marital status is not a barrier to fostering. Our foster carers can be single, married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner.

I don't have children

Having your own child is not a requirement. You may be good with children thanks to working with them, through your family and friends or volunteering. If you do have children of your own we carefully match foster children to your family and circumstances.

I haven't worked with children or young people

We're happy to have foster carers from all sorts of backgrounds. If you haven't worked with children before we only ask that you've got some experience caring for them through family or volunteering. We offer excellent training, support and development so you're ready for the rewards and challenges fostering brings.

I'd love to foster but I work

There are different types of fostering so you can still do it while working. Many of our working foster carers offer short-break care.

What we're looking for

You don't need any special qualifications to be a foster carer. But all our foster carers are special people who care about and like children.

You just need to go through a few checks to make sure fostering is right for you before you're assessed.

It isn't a case of one size fits all. Just like parents, foster carers come from all walks of life and we need people regardless of relationship or employment status. You can be married or single, in a same sex relationship or in a civil partnership. You might be employed, retired or not in work.

Looking after any child isn't easy. It will come as no surprise that you need patience and understanding and you'll be kind and caring.

You'll need to get on with all kinds of people from social workers and teachers to the parents, grandparents and brothers and sisters of your foster child.

You'll be expected to take part in meetings about your foster child so it's important that you either have a car or access to public transport so you can attend these.

But there are a few rules that we have to stick to that may mean you can't foster at the moment:

- You can't smoke (including e-cigarettes) if you look after children under five or children of any age who have a health problem or disability
- You must tell us about any criminal convictions you may have. Some – but not all – mean you can't be a foster carer
- You need to be in good physical and mental health and have been in good health for at least the last 12 months
- You should have had some experience of caring for children
- Your home must be in good condition where your ownership or tenancy is secure
- You must be prepared to help your foster child with their education and take part in social activities
- Any pets you have must be child-friendly

Foster for Derbyshire

Types of care on offer

All children are different. That's why we need different types of foster homes. You'll need to decide what would work best for you and your family. Here's a quick guide to the different types of homes we need.

Short-term foster care

This is where children are likely to return home to their family after a short stay – up to three months – with foster carers.

Intermediate foster care

This is where children are likely to return home to their family or some other permanent living arrangements but it may take a while for it to happen.

Long-term foster care

This is for children who can't return to their family. They need a long term foster family – possibly permanently – where adoption may not be possible.

Supported lodgings

This is a specialist scheme which provides a bridge between leaving care and living fully independently. This scheme is for young people aged 16 to 21. You still need to be assessed but you would be a supported lodgings provider rather than a foster carer.

Contract care

This is our most specialised fostering scheme. Because of that you will receive an additional weekly fee on top of the usual fostering allowances. This is for children aged 11 to 18 who have challenging and complex problems and need a higher level of understanding, support and guidance.

You must have experience of working with children and ideally have worked with young people with emotional or behavioural problems. In order to be a contract carer you can't have anyone else under the age of 16 currently living with you.

In recognition of the skills and qualities needed, contract carers are paid a fee on top of the usual fostering allowances. Contract care requires a 24-hour commitment so you'll be expected to have no other employment.

Contract care (disability)

We also have a contract care scheme for disabled children which provides short breaks and full-time placements for children with the most complex disabilities. You will need experience of working with or caring for a child or young person with a disability.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Children under 18 who are applying for asylum in the UK and have no relatives living in the UK need foster homes. We're looking for foster carers or supported lodgings providers who could look after these young people.

Disabled children fostering service

This is for children with either a learning or physical disability. These children are all unique and have different needs.

Although it's useful to have experience of caring for children with disabilities **it is not essential.**

We need carers who can provide full-time homes for children as well as link carers who offer care for planned, short periods of time to provide support to families.



Change lives

Taking the time to get it right

It takes time to make sure all our foster carers are the right people to look after our children. That's why it can take up to six months to become an approved foster carer.

As you'd expect we have to check you out. And you'll want to ask us and experienced foster carers a whole lot more about the job we'll need you to do.

So before you can foster we'll need:

- References from your employers, ex-partners and children who have left home
- A Disclosure and Barring check (DBS) – commonly known as a criminal background check
- To contact your GP and other organisations you have contact with such as schools and health visitors
- The names of two friends and two family members who can give you a personal reference and a relative who can tell us about your ability to look after a child
- A full medical – which we will pay for
- To talk to other family members in your home to make sure that fostering is right for them as well

These checks form part of a wider assessment that we'll carry out with you.

As part of the assessment process you'll be asked to take part in a three-day training course where you will meet other foster carers.

We'll want to talk to you about your own background and relationships and we'll talk about why you want to foster.

You can tell us about experiences you've had that will be of benefit when fostering as well as talking about the types of children who may need to live with foster carers.

At the end of the assessment we'll write a report using the information that you've given us. You will be able to see what we've written but not what other people have said.

This report is then presented to a panel of independent people who will recommend whether or not you should be approved as a foster carer. The county council considers this recommendation and makes the final decision.

You'll have a social worker with you every step of the way. If you decide at any point that fostering is not for you, you can pull out at any time.

And if we think there's a reason you shouldn't do it, we can too.

If you do decide to stop the fostering process then you can come back to us at a later date if you wish.



Is this the right time for you?

Fostering is rewarding and can be good fun but it also requires patience and commitment. It's important that you think about whether this is the right time for you.

With that in mind, please consider the following:

- Have you recently had a major life event such as a bereavement?
- Are your own children going through any big changes such as GCSEs or starting school?
- Are you providing support for other family members such as elderly relatives?
- Have you recently moved house or are you thinking of moving?

None of these things will stop you from fostering but we do advise that you have a chat with us about it. It might be that this isn't the right time for you and we might ask you to come back to us at a later date.

Allowances

We pay a weekly allowance for each child you care for. These will vary depending on the age of the child, the child's need and your own skills and experience.

When foster carers are approved they need to register as self-employed with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). This is a simple process and full support is provided by our fostering service, Foster Talk and HMRC.

Full details are available in the foster carer's financial handbook which you can find here www.derbyshire.gov.uk/fosterallowances

The first step on your journey

Now that you've made the first step on your journey to potentially becoming a foster carer we'd like to find out more about you.

We'll give you some time to read this information and we'll be in touch in the next few days to talk to you in more detail about what kind of fostering may best suit you and your family.

We hold regular 'Talk Fostering' events where you can meet our fostering team, our foster carers and their children. **You'll also have the chance to ask us any questions you may have.**

To find out when our events are visit
www.derbyshire.gov.uk/fostering

We look forward to speaking to you soon.



Welcome to your exciting journey!

Exploration

- Read our information and visit www.derbyshire.gov.uk/fostering
 - Talk to social workers and foster carers
- Have a home visit to decide if fostering is for you
 - Make an application

Step one

Initial checks and registration

- Background checks including DBS
 - Medicals with your GP
 - Personal references
- Family tree and pet questionnaire
 - Home safety check
 - Financial statement

Step two – two months

Training

- Three-day preparation course

Step three

Assessment

- We look at your family's skills and strengths
- We look at your background and experiences
- We interview your referees and complete a report

Step four – four months

Approval and panel

- You'll be invited to attend panel with your social worker
 - The panel will make a recommendation
 - The county council will make a decision
- You'll be allocated your own supervising social worker

Step five

- Becoming a fostering family
- We'll match you with a child or children
 - **Welcome to the team!**