



Foster Care for disabled children

The disability fostering team

We aim to provide family-based short breaks (known as Link Care) and longer term foster care for children and young people under 18 years of age who have a learning and/or physical disability.

In Derbyshire there are more than 100 disabled children under 18 who benefit from disability fostering.



Why disability fostering is needed

The pressures of family life can be great for us all. It can be particularly intense for parents or carers of children who have a disability. The children themselves may have few opportunities to make friends and can become socially isolated. Spending some time with another family is a great way for these children to experience new friendships whilst enabling their parents to have a short break.

Link care

A short break with another family can widen a child's social circle, social skills and provide opportunities for new experiences. Short-break care provides the platform for increasing social skills through shared activities with new friends.

Longer term fostering

For disabled children who are unable to live with their own family, long-term carers offer safe care and provide stability in a loving home environment. The carer's support helps the child's development towards his or her full potential.

What do I need to offer?

Whether you are offering long-term care or short-break link care all you need is energy, a spare bedroom (for children over two years old) and the commitment to meet the needs of a child who has disabilities.

Long-term carers will need to be able to offer a full-time commitment. But we are often able to offer long-term foster carers some short-break care to give them a rest.

Short-break link carers will need to give time at weekends or during the week, school holidays or term time.

Whatever time you can offer, from day care to an overnight stay or a long term placement, it will be valued. We do ask, however, for a firm ongoing commitment.



Meet some of the children who use our service

Michael

Michael is 12 years old and has day care with his link carer every third Saturday, with occasional overnight stays as well. He has Down's syndrome and visual and hearing impairments. He has lots of energy and likes to have one-to-one attention. He needs close supervision to ensure that he is safe when outside as he tends to wander off. He enjoys trips to the park, going bowling, trips to the zoo and playing on the PlayStation. Since starting secondary school, Michael has become more assertive and often pushes boundaries, like other children of his age. His parents find that the care offered gives them a much-needed break as well as giving Michael the opportunity to meet new people. His link carer and her children feel that Michael has become part of their family and they all look forward to his visits.

Susan

Susan is 15 years old. She has had regular short breaks (two overnight stays every week, including in school holidays) with the same foster carers since she was five years old and they have built a very positive relationship with her and her family. Susan has autism which affects her communication, makes changes to routine difficult for her to manage and affects the way she socialises with others.

Susan attends a specialist school. Susan enjoys watching TV – Disney DVDs especially – and playing with her toys. She can become very distressed when she doesn't understand something or has to do something she doesn't want to. She needs lots of help with managing her personal care including toileting and bathing. She can be affectionate and clearly enjoys seeing her foster carers.

Her mother reports that she would be lost without the support they offer her. The carers say that they find looking after Susan rewarding and that she has become an important part of their lives.





Molly

Molly is five years old and has been living with the same foster carers since she was a baby. She has foetal alcohol syndrome caused by her mother drinking while pregnant. This has resulted in a number of disabilities including problems feeding, learning disabilities and general developmental delay. Molly has a gastrostomy through which she is tube fed as she has a very poor appetite. Molly has overcome many hurdles and now attends her local mainstream school with some one-to-one support. She is lively, bubbly and full of enthusiasm. She loves horse riding, animals, playing with other children and watching videos. Her foster family state that they were quite worried about their ability to manage her care initially, especially the tube feeding, but had training and support and now feel completely at ease with meeting all her needs. They describe her as delightful, couldn't imagine life without her and are hoping to adopt her soon.

Being a disability foster carer

Ongoing support is provided to our carers by our team of social workers. We are also involved in the recruitment and assessment of prospective foster cares. Some foster carers choose to care for disabled children only, while others choose to care for both non-disabled and disabled children.

Foster care can be rewarding and fun – sharing activities and developing relationships. Offering the one-to-one care and attention and seeing the progress a child makes with a foster carer is both enjoyable and rewarding.

Just as the children who need foster care are all unique, there is no typical carer. We positively welcome applicants from all walks of life. We do not discriminate on the grounds of disability, age, gender, sexuality, marital status, race or religion.

We particularly welcome applications from people with single-floor or adapted properties.

How to apply

The assessment takes about six months and you will be guided through the whole process, and once approved we'll provide ongoing support, training and incentives.

Disability foster carers are approved in the same way as other foster carers and are assessed to the same standard.

You can contact us for more information or to start the application process in a number of ways:


- **www.derbyshire.gov.uk/disabilityfostering**
- **Call Derbyshire free, Tel: 0800 083 7744**
- **email: fostering@derbyshire.gov.uk**

However you choose to contact us we will ask you to provide basic information and will then send out our information leaflet.

Approximately five days after you receive our leaflet we'll contact you to see whether you'd like to hear from a recruitment team social worker. This initial contact gives you a real opportunity to discuss fostering and together we can decide if you'd like to proceed with your application.



Call Derbyshire for free
0800 083 77 44
derbyshire.gov.uk/fostering

 **DERBYSHIRE**
County Council
Improving life for local people