



Change a young life...

foster in Norfolk

* Your guide to becoming
a foster carer with Norfolk
Fostering Service

norfolk
fostering



Norfolk County Council

Help change young lives in Norfolk become a foster carer with us

We all know Norfolk is a great place to grow up and we want it to be a county where every child and young person can flourish.

For those children who have had a difficult start, foster carers can help change their lives by providing a stable, safe, and nurturing home to help them develop and achieve their potential.

What is fostering?

Fostering is when you temporarily look after a child or young person aged 0-18 who needs care. Foster carers provide a safe and stable home environment. They support and nurture the young people they are caring for, help them tackle their challenges and work closely with our specialist fostering social workers to help change young lives for the better.

Foster carers receive training, support, fees and allowances.

* Who can foster?

All kinds of people can become foster carers - using their different backgrounds, life skills, and experiences to help change young lives.

Children who need care come from all communities and backgrounds in our diverse county - and we positively welcome foster carers who do too.

Having a difficult start in life yourself could also be a benefit if it is successfully resolved. The experience can help you walk in children's shoes and give you a good understanding of what works to help them overcome challenges.

Having some experience of being around children is essential. You also need to be able to provide a stable and nurturing home, be patient, empathetic and compassionate - and be committed to working with us to support the children you care for.





From initial enquiry to approval your step-by-step guide to becoming an approved foster carer

Becoming an approved foster carer can take between four to six months.

It seems a long time, but the process involves a comprehensive assessment to make sure that together we feel it's the right move and to ensure you are ready to take on the challenges of helping to change a young life.

1. Initial enquiry: We will contact you within one working day of expressing an interest.

2. Initial information visit: We will arrange a one-to-one information visit with you, or you can attend one of our drop-in sessions.

3. Applying to become a foster carer: Following the initial one-to-one information visit, we will send you an application form.

4. Home visit and initial assessment: Once you've submitted your application, a social worker will visit you at home to start the assessment process. Together you will discuss a range of topics – from your motivation to foster, your life experiences and your family and friends networks.

Buddy: At this stage a buddy can be provided. A buddy is an experienced foster carer who can give support, advice and guidance on your own journey to fostering.

5. Skills to Foster course: Subject to the initial assessment you will be invited to attend this course. It will give you a thorough understanding of the needs of children who are in care and the role of fostering including the lifestyle changes it brings for families and friends.

6. Full assessment: This is a more in depth assessment of you and your family and takes place over several sessions with a social worker who will write a detailed assessment report for the Fostering Panel.

7. Fostering Panel: This is a team of people experienced in fostering and adoption who you will meet. The panel will consider your assessment report and make a recommendation to our Agency Decision Maker (ADM) – a senior officer in Norfolk County Council's Children's Services department.

8. Final approval: Once approved, you will be allocated a supervising social worker. Working closely with a social worker is an essential part of fostering. They will arrange your training and support plan and identify children who would be a good match for you and your loved ones. They will visit you regularly, provide professional guidance and offer nurture so that you can give the best care for our children and young people. They will be by your side from the time you step into your new role, and for as long as you are a foster carer with us.

Types of fostering

There are lots of different types of fostering – reflecting the different needs of children.

At first it will be hard to know which type will suit you and your family. Don't worry, because we'll work closely with you to help make the right choice throughout the process. Whatever you decide is right, you'll have our support all the way.

Long-term fostering

Long term foster care involves looking after a child or young person until they are 18. It provides a permanent, consistent, secure family home – and generates a positive sense of belonging. Long term foster carers can also extend their connection with their young person through the Stay Put scheme where they continue to stay with the family beyond the age of 18.

Fostering young people (aged 13-18)

A significant number of children who need foster carers are young people. They need empathy, understanding, boundaries, and to trust their carers to help them find their feet, and achieve their potential. The rewards of success are big for foster carers and young people alike.

Short-term fostering

Short-term fostering involves providing a caring and nurturing home for a few weeks or months – for a variety of reasons. It could be while social workers and other professionals assess and support birth families to see if their child can return home, or to provide respite breaks, or while an adoptive family or long term foster family is being found. Whatever the circumstances, the skills and training, kindness and compassion of short term foster carers can help change the lives of many children.



Short breaks

Short breaks fostering provides an opportunity for children and young people with physical and/or learning disabilities to gain new experiences, have time dedicated to them, and develop new relationships outside their everyday environment while giving their families a well-deserved respite break.

These children and young people thrive when they are in a familiar environment and develop strong relationships, so short break carers often care for the same child or young person on a regular basis. It is a long term commitment and matching children with the right short break carer is very important.

Fostering children with disabilities

Children and young people with a disability or who live with a specific health condition can thrive and fulfil their aspirations when they are living in a stable, secure, and nurturing family home. Foster carers who look after children with disabilities have access to specialist training, advice, and support groups at every step of the way.

Siblings

Brothers and sisters do better if they can remain in foster care together– and while it may not always be possible, everyone works hard to try to achieve it.

For foster carers taking in sibling groups of two to three children, there may be practical considerations such as extra spare bedrooms or a larger car, but the rewards for you and your family can be life-long and priceless. For the children, staying together can give them greater stability moving forward.





Respite care

Respite care means providing a home for child or young person for short periods of time in order to give their primary foster family, adoptive family, or their birth parents a break. It can be invaluable to support primary carers or birth parents and help prevent relationships breaking down.

Respite care can be needed for up to two weeks. It may also be a regular part of a child's care plan.

Parent and child fostering

Parent and child fostering involves looking after vulnerable mums, dads and their young children to provide advice, guidance, and be a role model to help them recognise, understand and respond to their children's needs. They may need support because of a poor experience of parenting when they were growing up, or because they need extra support with picking up parenting skills. These parents can thrive on having direct personal experience of living in a caring and structured family environment – and it can make a significant contribution to helping the family stay together.

Emergency foster care

Emergency foster carers give a home to children or young people when they need to be kept safe urgently – for example if they are in immediate danger. Carers may be needed at any time of day or night, including weekends, and may need to provide care for up to six days. Emergency carers are part of a rota system and are paid a retainer, in addition to fees and allowances for the time they are providing care.

Enhanced fostering

This involves fostering children and young people who have been cared for in a residential unit. Supporting their transition to foster care involves a longer period of planning and introduction. Some of these children may have already experienced foster care breakdowns, so building relationships and trust is key before they move in full time. This is a big next step for many of the children and we need to know it's the right one. It can be equally rewarding for carers. New training methods and therapeutic approaches are available in our training offer to further develop your skill set and knowledge.

New Roads foster care

New Roads foster care involves working paid shifts within one of our residential care hubs to develop a bond with a young person before you look after them or support their return to their families.

The young people you will be working with are in care, on the edge of care, or at risk of their care plan or family relationships breaking down. Your role can help prevent this and enable them to find the stability, security, and nurturing environment which can help them lead happy and fulfilling lives.

PACE* bed foster care

A PACE bed foster carer provides a safe bed and a warm welcoming environment for a child or young person at the request of the police under the *Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). This may be due to circumstances at home, or it may be due to criminal activity. You will be required to provide care until the next working morning, which may be for a single night, or over a weekend or bank holiday.

You will not be called on if a young person has been assessed by a police custody officer as posing a risk to the public under the PACE Act.





Why foster with us? because we will be with you all the way

You won't be alone on your fostering journey. From starting out, to becoming an experienced carer, we provide excellent training, wrap around support, a dedicated social worker – and you'll have access to our 24/7 support line.

We have a great reward and recognition system. For those carers who look after children with the greatest needs and help change their lives, our fee structure is among the highest of all local authorities in the country.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)

We need more foster carers to look after unaccompanied minor asylum seeking children (UASC) in Norfolk. This is because of the increased numbers of children coming into the UK, and the now mandatory National Transfer Scheme which ensures a fair distribution of asylum seekers across the UK. Working with unaccompanied minor asylum seeking children and young people can be extremely rewarding. You will be nurturing young people who have experienced loss, separation and trauma, so they can thrive and achieve their dreams and aspirations of building a new life in the UK. It is a privilege and many carers who start this journey continue to foster UASC for many years.

We're looking for foster carers who are highly resilient, patient and understanding. Part of the role is to prepare these young people for independent living and support their emotional, language and cultural needs. We'll help support you with specialist training, and link you to the services and community organisations you will need to help the young people integrate.

 To find out about our New Deal for foster carers, please visit **www.norfolk.gov.uk/fostering**

And finally - as a local authority, our fostering service is not for profit – our business is solely focused on improving children's outcomes so they can flourish.

Don't just take our word for it though!

We ask our foster carers to regularly feedback their experiences of being with Norfolk Fostering Service – anonymously if they prefer. Here's what some of our carers have told us.

"My social worker is brilliant, she's always available and always keeps in touch, or she gives me other numbers to call and they always try to help too. She's non-judgemental, encouraging, and supportive. She gets it and that's really important."

Foster carer – approved in 2022

"We have both worked with children in our professional lives and really wanted to make a permanent difference to the lives of children who need a helping hand. We could not have become the foster carers we are today if it wasn't for the nurturing and support from the fostering team at Norfolk County Council."

Experienced foster carers

"During the assessment I was anxious about 'can I do this, can I really help a child?' but I was able to be honest with my social worker who reassured me and helped me to see my skills and strengths. There was a clear plan so I knew exactly what we were going to talk about during each session, and there was time for me to reflect on the previous session and ask any questions that might have come up."

Foster carer – approved in 2022

* And here's what children and young people have said about our foster carers

"Support about my family is amazing from my foster carer – I can always talk to her about anything."

"My foster carer will always support me in my decisions about my education – when I wanted to drop Maths to do History, my foster carer supported this and talked to the teachers."





Help change a young life...

foster in Norfolk

Norfolk Fostering Service is part of Norfolk County Council.

There are over 1,000 children and young people in care in Norfolk. Many are looked after by foster carers. Norfolk Fostering Service always needs more people who can provide the strong, stable, and secure family environments that can help change more young lives in our county.

If you are interested in fostering, or have more questions, please get in touch with our friendly team:

 **Call us on 01603 306649**
Text fostering to 87222*

Visit our website – **www.norfolk.gov.uk/fostering**
and complete an initial application form.

*texts cost one standard network rate message



If you need this information in large print, or in an alternative version, please contact Norfolk County Council Customer Service Centre on **0344 800 8020**



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