

what's in it for
ME?

Social Services Agency

FOSTERING

Everyone's Interest

Bright lives, bright futures for children

Children are our future. They need to be cared for and looked after so that, when they grow up, they can lead full and happy lives. Which is why foster carers have such an important role to play. Whether they are taking care of a child for just a few days or a number of years they are making a real difference to an individual life and a real contribution to our community. Not all children enjoy the same advantages, and for those who may not have had the best start in life, or who come from a difficult background, foster carers can offer them care for the present and a link to the future.

There are a number of children here in Gibraltar who need to be looked after, either for a short while, or on a longer term basis. For people who would like to help these children, this leaflet explains all about the different types of fostering.

Once you have read through our guide, to take the next step please telephone the number given at the end. Fostering can be a really rewarding experience for everyone.



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What kind of children need fostering?

There is no such thing as a typical foster child. The children can be any age, from toddlers up to teenagers. They come from all sorts of different backgrounds. Some have special needs.

The reasons that children need to be fostered are as varied as the children themselves and over time, their needs may change. But one thing they all share and that's a need to be looked after either for a short while or permanently by somebody who can offer them stability and care.

Who becomes a foster carer?

If you ask yourself, "Can I become a foster carer?" the answer is quite probably "Yes".

There are no strict rules as to who can become a foster carer. We want people from all backgrounds and from all walks of life to come forward. Some of our carers are single, others are couples. Some already have a family, others don't have children of their own.

There is no set upper age limit, either.

Size of house doesn't matter, just so long as there's room for everyone.

What foster carers will have, however, are certain qualities. Qualities like patience, understanding, warmth, and, of course, a sense of humour.

Some people will feel best suited to looking after children on a temporary basis; others will want to care long term. Whichever you feel happiest with, you can be sure that you'll be giving that child something precious; the knowledge that someone cares.



Temporary Care

Some children need just a few days or weeks of foster care, perhaps while their own families are coping with a difficult or stressful time, or to provide a regular break. Others may need a longer period of temporary care while we help their family to get over more serious difficulties or until we can make alternative longer-term arrangements for their care.

Relief foster care

Some people like to start out as relief carers before they commit themselves to full-time fostering. Relief foster carers look after a child for short periods such as weekends or during holidays.

Children needing relief care will often live at home with their parents, but will spend some time in foster care with the same family on a regular basis, usually to give their own parents a chance to cope with difficult periods in their lives.

Relief care may also be required by children who have physical or learning disabilities or particular medical conditions, and who need the occasional break for a few hours, or a weekend. This gives the children the chance to meet new people and perhaps enjoy some new experiences while their own parents have some time to themselves.





Relief foster carers don't always need experience of disability. We will provide preparation classes so that by the time you meet the children for whom you will be caring, you will be ready and able to take on the challenge. You will also have the support of your family link social worker and other foster carers.

Short-term fostering

Short-term fostering involves caring for children temporarily in your home while their parents are unable to look after them.

Children who are fostered on a short-term basis can be of all ages. Many of them need to be fostered for only a few days or weeks. Others, however, may stay longer while their families are helped with solving any problems. Occasionally, we may also need foster carers who can provide a home to a young baby before the child is placed for adoption

It is normally very important that short-term carers help children keep in close touch with their relatives. This usually happens through visits and telephone calls.

Long-term fostering

For some children, temporary care isn't the answer. For them, a new home for life will offer something they might otherwise lose. A future in which they can make the most of their lives.

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These children need families who care for them throughout the remainder of their childhood, and will also help them to keep up links with their natural families. These children need long-term foster homes. Most are over 5 years of age.

Some will have brothers and sisters, and so will need a family who can take more than one child. When a family has been chosen for a child, there's an introductory period during which you all get to know each other. Once that period is over, the child moves in.

Getting ready for fostering

Initial preparation

We appreciate that deciding to foster a child is a big step and that most people will want more information than we can provide in this leaflet. All prospective foster carers are invited to come along to preparation groups. These groups usually run for about 5 sessions, and are led by experienced social workers. You can use these preparation meetings to decide whether or not you'd like to go ahead with fostering.

Becoming approved

Many people, who would make good carers hesitate about putting their names forward because they imagine that qualifying is a long and difficult process. We aim to make the approval process as straightforward as possible, as the last thing we want to do is discourage all the different sorts of people who can provide loving and supportive homes.

Of course, we need to take care when choosing foster carers. The children's best interests are naturally our top priority. We cannot approve anyone convicted of any offence against children. So, with your permission, we will need to carry out some formal checks.

The process of becoming a foster carer is a two-way thing. You get the chance to find out about what is involved just as we get to know you.



How we will help you

Everyone who fosters will get help and support to make things a success for themselves and the child.

Training and support

All foster carers have their own “link worker”. They’ll be on hand to provide advice and help whenever you need it. The children also have their own social worker. Carers are regularly invited to support groups where you can have extra training and where you can discuss experiences with other carers.

Fostering allowance

All foster carers are paid an allowance to cover the costs of looking after the child. Foster carers can also receive help with start-up items like beds, bedding and baby equipment.



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What to do now

If you are interested in finding out more about fostering, we would be delighted to hear from you.



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If you no longer need this leaflet, why not pass it to a friend or neighbour.

Models used on all photographs