

**Fostering
Hearts'
guide to
fostering**

**Can you change
a child's life for
the better?**



For more information call us
on 01442 953 123 or email
louise@fosteringhearts.co.uk

Hi, If you're reading this, you're probably thinking about becoming a foster carer, which is great news.

There is currently a big shortage of foster carers across Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. You could be just the person or family that a foster child or young person needs.

I'm Louise, Fostering Hearts' recruitment and community officer. It's my job to talk to people thinking about fostering. Through hundreds of conversations, we've come up with the top 5 questions that people ask.

They are:

1. What is fostering?
2. Can I foster?
3. How do I become a foster carer?
4. What support will I receive?
5. Why foster with Fostering Hearts?



If you need any more information, don't hesitate to contact us by phone, email or on Facebook.

We also have lots more information on our website

www.fosteringhearts.co.uk

The Maylands Building
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
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1. What is fostering?

Fostering is about continuing a family life for a child or young person when they can no longer live with their birth family.

Foster children may stay a few days, a few months or occasionally for many years. Children come into care for a range of reasons but many have experienced abuse and neglect.

These experiences often affect behaviour and their ability to trust people so foster carers must be patient and understanding.

An important part of a carer's role is to support children with their education and learning and prepare them for independence.

Foster carers work as part of a team, you will have a supervising social worker, who is there to support, supervise and empower you.

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2. Can I foster?

A lot of people that contact us to become foster carers worry that they won't be eligible.

They often think that their living situation, employment or relationship status will be an obstacle, but they are often mistaken.

We need carers from all backgrounds as long as you:

- Are committed to helping children and young people to reach their potential
- Do not have any criminal convictions against children or of a sexual nature.
- Are over 21
- Have at least 1 spare bedroom

Then there is nothing that excludes you from being a Fostering Hearts foster carer.

After talking to you, and meeting you, we'll be able to make a final decision about whether we think you have the skills, experience and time to be a foster carer.

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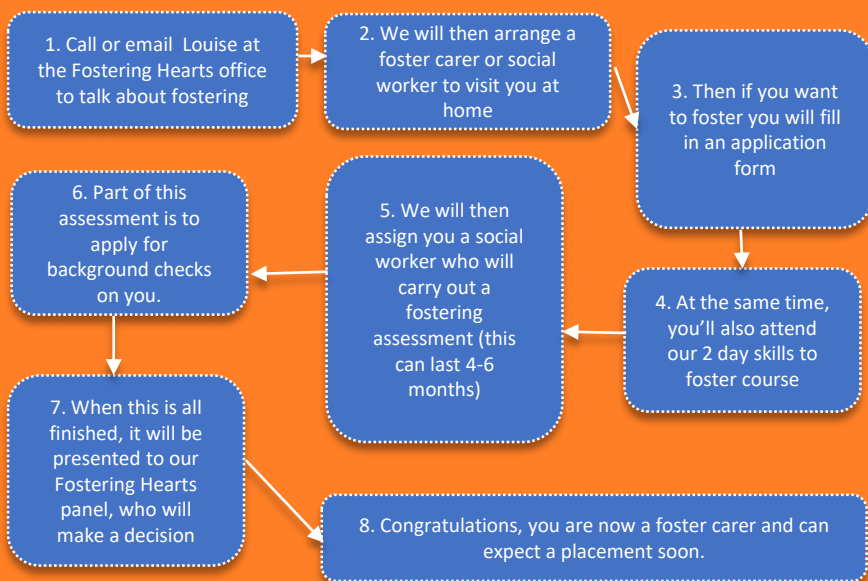
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3. How do I become a foster carer?

There is an application process which all potential foster carers have to go through, regardless of who you choose to foster for; and this is it:



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4. What support will I get?

Every fostering agency will offer you a different level of support. These are some of the things we offer our foster carers:

A supervising social worker. It's their job to work directly with you, normally this means a monthly visit, and weekly check in phone calls. If you need them more (especially when starting out) they will be there for you.

An emergency line which is answered 24/7, in case your supervisor is unavailable

A great financial package:
£413 for children aged 11 and over
£390 for children under 11
You may also receive more for taking children with more difficult issues – up to £625 per week.

Lots of events during the year to entertain you and the children. For instance, trips to the zoo, bowling, foster carer meals out.

A training programme which makes sure you have the right skills to do your job.

Many local support groups, which help you connect with foster carers in your area, giving you informal peer support.

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5. Why Fostering Hearts?

Choosing who you foster for is a very important decision, and one you should spend some time thinking about.

The first choice you will have to make, is whether you foster for an independent agency (like Fostering Hearts) or for a local authority.

Both have their advantages, but the reason we were founded was we felt we could better support carers, and children outside of the constraints of the government.

At Fostering Hearts, we do things differently. We believe foster care is about team work, and above all else, putting the child first. We are part of the Positive Aspirations Group, whose mission is to improve the lives of everyone it comes into contact with.

With the child in mind, we believe they should live in a home that not only keeps them safe, but also inspires them to be the best that they can be. We always promote positive aspirations for young people.

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Want more info?

There is only so much information we could put in this guide, but we realise you need a lot more before deciding whether fostering is right for you.

This is why we have created 4 further guides, which cover specific areas:

- Fostering finances including pay and tax
- Parent and child fostering guide
- A guide to fostering assessments
- Fostering unaccompanied minors and refugees

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