

Foster for Tameside



FOSTER FOR TAMESIDE
CHANGE A LOCAL CHILD'S LIFE

 **Tameside**
Metropolitan Borough

 **FOSTER**
FOR TAMESIDE COUNCIL

 **NHS**
Tameside and Glossop
Clinical Commissioning Group

What is fostering?

Fostering for Tameside Council means you are helping children in your local area. We are not-for-profit and our locally based carers help keep children close to their existing schools and support systems. Fostering is a fun, flexible, challenging and rewarding role where you as a carer can make a real difference to Children's' lives. The reasons children come into care vary widely, including a parent's short-term illness or another temporary problem within the family. Some children may have witnessed domestic violence or a parent's depression or drug or alcohol abuse. Others may have been abused or neglected. Each child's circumstances and needs are unique.

Could you foster?

Every year, tens of thousands of children across the UK need foster carers while they can't live with their own families. That means thousands of new foster carers are needed every year. Could you be one of them?

What is the role of a foster carer?

- By becoming a foster carer you will be providing a nurturing and welcoming environment where children and young people will be safe and have a place to call home.
- You will be giving them the opportunity to grow and develop to reach their full potential, by helping to ensure that their emotional, health and educational needs are met.
- The challenging backgrounds that many cared for children and young people have experienced means they may find it hard to build relationships. With support, patience and reassurance, you can help a child or young person to build their self-esteem and confidence.
- Fostering today involves working closely with others involved in the welfare of the children you are caring for.
- Foster carers work closely as a team, not only with professionals but also form a strong support network with each other.
- All cared for children and young people have a care plan and as a foster carer, you will be asked to attend meetings and reviews to talk about their wellbeing.
- Our children come from diverse backgrounds with different life experiences. Your role will be to help a child understand and feel positive about themselves.
- We try to provide placement choice for children and foster carers so that children can be matched with a loving and nurturing family and achieve their potential.

Who can foster?

Children and young people need foster carers from all backgrounds with a wide range of life, work and care experiences. All foster carers are given ongoing training and support to develop the skills they need to help children thrive.

Just as no two children are the same, foster carers need to come from a variety of backgrounds and have different life experiences, skills and qualities to help meet the needs of children and young people in foster care. You can be a foster carer without having any specific qualifications, and you don't need to have children of your own. What's important is that you can support, nurture and care for children who cannot live with their own families. There is no typical foster carer, and we welcome applicants from all backgrounds, nationalities, religions, genders and ages. The most important thing is that you care about the welfare of children and young people and want to help them achieve stability in unsettling times. You will have the skills to work as part of a team and can relate well to children and young people, making them feel like part of the family.

"It's the whole family that fosters, not just the foster carer. It is so important to make the child feel like a part of your family from the start, no matter how long they are with you for"

- Jo, Tameside Foster Carer

What are the different types of fostering?

- **Short-term fostering-**

Short-term emphasises that the child will one day move on, either back to parents/relatives or on to a long-term foster/adoptive placement. It is a very special and important role which may involve working closely with parents to improve their relationship with the child, working with children's behaviours and needs, or preparing a child for a move to a permanent home. These types of arrangements range from looking after children from one night to a number of months, and sometimes longer. They can sometimes be adapted to long term foster care if the match between child and carer is deemed to be good.



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- **Long-term fostering –**

We talk about long term foster care when the plan for the child is that they cannot live with a family member. Therefore we need a foster placement that can care for them for the duration of their childhood and into adulthood. Placements of this nature often involve teaching the children selfcare skills so that they can move onto independence in a positive way.

- **Respite fostering –**

Sometimes parents and carers need regular breaks, maybe because they have health problems, or because their child has complex needs and it takes a lot of energy to care for them. Respite means that a child is placed with a foster carer for a short period of time and this may occur on a regular basis. Within Tameside there is a Family Link Scheme for the families of children with a disability. This means that we link the child with a specific carer who will look after that child for a series of short breaks (maybe one weekend a month). Often this service will be provided on a regular basis for some years and the respite carer becomes a vital part of the support network for that child and their family.

- **Supported lodgings scheme –**

Tameside also runs a supported lodgings scheme for young people aged 16 and over.

The journey to becoming a foster carer:

- **Step 1- Initial Enquiry**

Complete our online enquiry form at www.tameside.gov.uk/fostering or call 0161 342 2342 or you can also make an enquiry via council's social media platforms. Once the enquiry is received, our Recruitment Officer will give you a call to find out a little about you and chat through any questions you may have, take some details, and send you an information pack.

- **Step 2 - Registration of Interest**

If you are keen to progress your enquiry, you can ask to be assessed to foster by the service. Our Recruitment duty officer will have arranged a follow-up call with you, where you will have the chance to ask any further questions and if you are happy, they will conduct a telephone screening which takes around 30 minutes to find out more about you, your family & home life and your motivations to foster.

- **Step 3 – Initial Home Visit**

Once you have registered your interest with us then a fostering social worker will arrange a convenient time to visit to your home, to meet you and your family, discuss your plans to foster and to explore your lifestyle. The Social Worker will also view your accommodation and the proposed room for fostering. They can also answer any questions you may have about the children and the fostering process. You can then take some time to decide whether fostering is right for you.

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- **Step 4 – Pre-Approval Training**

You will have had some time to think and hopefully will decide that fostering is right for you. If you need any more information, we are here to support you every step of the way. We will then invite you to attend our Skills To Foster training course. This aims to prepare you for the fostering role, and you will have the chance to meet other applicants too.

- **Step 5 - Application Form**

On completing Skills to Foster, you will then complete a fostering application form which details yours and your family's information, details about your home, any employment and references. There will also be some other forms such as consent so we can complete mandatory statutory checks e.g. police and medical checks.

- **Step 6 – Fostering Assessment**

This stage involves an allocated assessing social worker visiting you at your house for about 6-8 times to get to know you, your family and any frequent visitors to understand whether you can offer a child a secure, safe and stable home atmosphere and meet the child's overall needs. The fostering assessing social worker then writes a detailed report based on the information gathered and observations, outlining your skills and attributes and recommending as to whether you are suitable, and for which type of fostering. You will have the opportunity to read the assessment report and add your own comments too.

- **Step 7 - The Fostering Panel**

Your detailed report will then be presented to the fostering panel who will consider your suitability to foster. You will attend the panel with your assessing social worker. The panel is made up of members with relevant qualifications, those who have experience working in fostering and adoption, and some members may have spent time in foster care themselves. The panel will ask you and the service any questions they may have, and then the fostering panel will make a recommendation about your approval to the fostering service i.e to the Agency Decision Maker, who considers their recommendation to reach a decision. You will then receive a letter to confirm your approval. If you haven't been approved, your assessing social worker will explain why, and there may be a chance to reapply in the future.

On average, the journey to approval can take around eight months from your first enquiry. This can seem like a long time, but Tameside fostering service need to make sure you are suitable, and prepare you as best as possible, to foster a child or young person in your local community.

- **Step 8 - Matching and Placement**

After you have been approved as a foster carer, the fostering team will contact you to discuss your first placement. We will work closely with you and your family to ensure the placement is the right match for you and for the foster child. We offer ongoing training and development, so you can continue to grow your skills as a foster carer. You will also receive ongoing support and guidance from your supervising social worker.

What sort of support will I receive?

- **Supervising Social Worker –**

After you are approved, you will be assigned a supervising social worker who will make frequent visits to your house. They will provide ongoing support and guidance to you and your family throughout your time as a foster carer and will be in hand to give advice and help with any concerns or worries you may have. Every child who is cared for by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council will also have their own social worker who works closely with the child and their family. They will make frequent visits to check on the child's progress and will be able to offer advice and guidance to you too. You will be expected as a foster carer to keep records about a child's placement and attend meetings where you will discuss the child's plans and expected to advocate and actively work as part of a team around the child.

- **Support Groups –**

Fostering service will run regular support groups for you to attend, where you can discuss any concerns, issues or worries with other foster carers, who will share their experiences and offer reassurance and advice when you need it. There are also specific support groups for babies and children with additional needs so you can attend the groups that best fit yours and the child's needs. You can attend more than one support group; Everyone is welcome, and the emphasis is on teamwork and supporting you and the children in your care as best we can.

What sort of support will I receive?



- **Training & Development –**

When you become a foster carer, you are required to complete the Training, Support & Development Standards (TSDs) within the first 12 months of becoming approved, or 18 months for Connected Carers. At Tameside, we offer an extensive programme of training, developed with the help of foster carers and professionals which is formed of both online training and in person sessions. There are courses for all foster carers, and more tailored courses to enable carers to develop specific skills, for instance with teenagers, babies, or children with additional needs and disabilities. Courses are run by our Fostering Managers with social workers, external professionals on specialist subjects and existing foster carers to give you the most informed and interactive sessions from experienced professionals and carers. Courses are held during the day with some in the evening to ensure all foster cares have the opportunity to attend.

- **Buddy System –**

After you are approved, you will be paired up with an experienced carer who will provide you with support, advice and guidance in your new role. You can contact your buddy, your social worker, or the out of hours team should you need to, so you are never on your own.

- **Fostering Network-** Once you become a foster carer with Tameside, you will receive an automatic membership with Fostering Network, where you can avail further training, guidance, advice and support.

Fostering Allowances

- **Weekly Payments** - All foster carers receive a weekly allowance which is paid every fortnight, and is made up of two elements:
 - An allowance based on the age of the child
 - An allowance based on your skills level as a foster carer

Foster Carers can work toward moving up the skills levels, with more experience fostering, by supporting with fostering recruitment activities and also by attending our training courses to further develop their skills.

- **Other Allowances** – Foster Carers will also receive an annual allowance to cover the cost of birthday, holiday and festivities.

In some cases, for instance when a child has additional needs, further allowances may be available to foster carers. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure carers are provided with the right level of support to meet the child's needs.

Carers are advised to register as self-employed with HMRC and allowances are tax-free. Any income support will not be affected as allowances received from fostering are not taken into account, although jobseekers allowance may be affected so we advice to check this if it applies to individuals or not.

Fostering Myths:

I am too old/young to foster-

If you are over 21 you can enquire about fostering, and there is no upper age limit. As long as you are fit and healthy enough to care for a child, that is the most important thing. We have carers in their 60s and 70s who bring some great experience to their foster care roles, so don't count yourself out.



I am single so I can't foster -

It makes no difference whether you are single, in a relationship or married, you can still foster. Many children benefit from the 1-1 support that a single foster carer can offer, so please don't be put off if you are single and want to enquire.

I have pets so I can't foster –

You can still foster if you have pets. Many children benefit from having an animal to look after. Pets can be a real source of comfort for children and can also teach responsibility. Don't see this as a barrier to fostering, we actively welcome applicants who have pets.

I am gay so I can't foster –

It does not matter whether you are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ+) single, in a relationship, civil partnership, married, divorced or widowed, There are no barriers to fostering based on sexuality, gender or relationship status.

Fostering Myths:



I work so I can't foster –

While we encourage the main carer to take on fostering fulltime, there may be chance for you to work part-time or in a flexible role, it would depend on your individual situation. Carers each have individual circumstances that we would be happy to discuss with you, if you feel you have the time to care for a child or young person and have a caring, nurturing and safe home, then please come and talk with us.

I don't have my own children so I can't foster –

When anyone becomes a parent for the first time, there is a big adjustment period, with every child having individual needs that require different types of care. This is the case for both birth parents and foster parents, and both take time to adjust to their new role. It may be that you have valuable experience caring for friends' and family's children, or through work e.g. if you have been a nursery nurse or a midwife. This should not stop you to enquire and have a chat with a member of Tameside Fostering Team.

Get in touch: contact our friendly team for an initial chat today:

"fostering has changed my life in every possible way.... to anyone considering fostering, go for it! - I did and haven't looked back" Tameside foster carer

Foster carers can make a real difference to children's lives - and that's a hugely rewarding job!

Tameside is actively recruiting foster carers and have a referral bonus scheme, where we provide £300 upon first placement.

Contact us:

- facebook.com/tamesidecouncil
- twitter.com/tamesidecouncil
- instagram.com/tamesidecouncil
- fosteringenquiries@tameside.gov.uk
- 0161 342 2342
- tameside.gov.uk/fostering