

# **Where foster homes are more than a place to stay**

## A guide to fostering



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# Your fostering journey starts here.

Life is full of magical moments – and when you join our team of foster carers, these moments become all the more special. That’s because it’s through your help, support and care that North Yorkshire’s children who may have had a difficult start in life can begin to look forward to a better future.

*Thank you for expressing an interest in fostering with us. Foster carers play a vital role within our team to help North Yorkshire’s young people develop their full potential. We always try to place children and young people with our own foster carers rather than with independent agencies, which means you will be helping local children from your own area.*

*This guide will help you understand more about what is involved, different types of fostering, the skills and qualities needed to be a foster carer, and the support, training and financial payments we provide. Fostering is a hugely rewarding but sometimes challenging role – by fostering with us you can be reassured that you will receive outstanding locally based support every step of the way.*

*After reading the guide, if you have any further questions, or would like to get in touch with us, all the contact information you will need is on Page 15.*

*Welcome to the start of your fostering journey!*

Alan Tucker  
Placement and Fostering Manager  
Fostering North Yorkshire  
Children and Families  
North Yorkshire Council



**“I always feel so ‘held’ by the fostering team and find it an absolute privilege and delight to be working alongside such outstanding people.”**

# Life as a foster carer

Fostering provides stability and a safe and caring environment for children who, for whatever reason, are unable to live with their own families. Many need to be looked after for a short period before returning to their family; others need to stay in foster care for much longer. Some children and young people need permanent foster placements that they will stay in for the rest of their childhood.

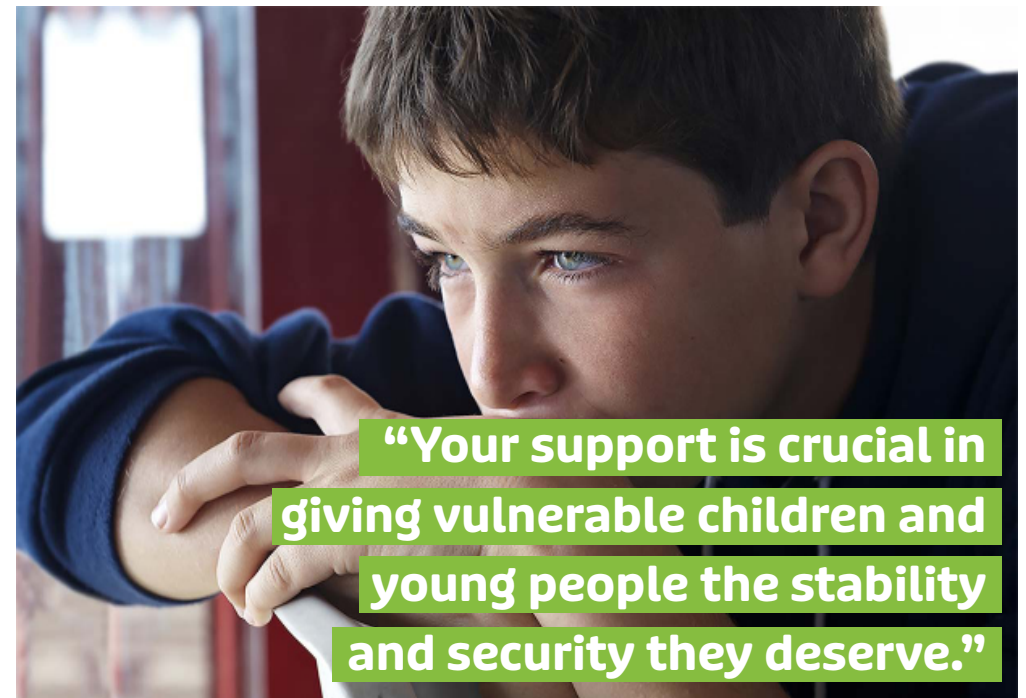
The support, encouragement and understanding foster carers give the child they are looking after helps them to learn to see life more positively, start to trust, and develop social skills.

Fostering North Yorkshire looks after around 325 children at any one time, in fostering placements across the county. They are various ages from babies to teenagers, come from many backgrounds and have various needs. Many have been neglected or abused; some may have had parents who were addicted to drugs or alcohol.

Some children have physical or learning disabilities and others have brothers and sisters that they don't want to be separated from. All of them are looking for a caring family to help them feel safe, secure and happy.

Foster care is an incredibly important job. It keeps these children safe from harm as well as helping them to develop those positive experiences and skills they might have missed out on earlier in life. It's also a hugely rewarding role. Watching a child grow in confidence, learn new things, and take small steps to a better future gives an amazing sense of achievement.

There is a shortage of foster carers in North Yorkshire, especially for older children and teenagers. This can mean that we have to place children with fostering providers outside the county, resulting in some children having to change schools and move away from family and friends. By working with us, you can have a direct and immediate impact by helping us keep children in their own communities. We are also developing our short breaks provision for families with disabled children.



**“Your support is crucial in giving vulnerable children and young people the stability and security they deserve.”**

# Who can foster?



## You can foster if:

- you're married, divorced, single, living on your own or with a partner and whatever your sexuality/gender
- you either own your home or rent
- you work full-time, part-time, are self employed, unemployed or retired as long as you have the time, patience and commitment to meet a child's needs.
- you meet our minimum age requirements – usually 21 years. In exceptional circumstances, for example with some Family and Friends Carers, this may be reduced to 18 years. There is no specific upper age limit.

- you are fit and able to care for a child. A medical assessment will be needed to consider this.
- you have a disability - this will not prevent you from becoming a foster carer so long as you are assessed as being able to meet the needs of a child.
- you are happy for us to carry out the required identity / background checks and references as part of the assessment process.
- You are residing in the UK for the foreseeable future in order to be able to meet the needs of a child and offer them stability.

You can foster whatever your ethnic, religious (or non religious) or cultural background – our foster carers come from many walks of life and different backgrounds, reflecting the children and young people in our care

## Your skills

What we're really interested in are the skills and qualities you could bring to fostering. You will need to be:

- patient, committed and resilient;
- an understanding of how children behave and their needs when they have experienced childhood trauma;
- available to look after a child before and after school, during holidays or when the child is sick; and
- active and have a healthy lifestyle.

**“My girls are very much attuned to other people's needs, young and old. They've got that through fostering.”**

## Your family

It's vital that you have the support of your family, as they will play an important part in making any placement. If you have children, they will need to be asked if they want to be involved in fostering, as it affects them as well. It's a decision that affects everybody, but everybody can benefit, too.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can I foster if I have a criminal record?

We will carry out enhanced criminal background checks for everyone over the age of 18 years living in your household. You cannot foster if you or others in your household have convictions for certain specified offences, including offences against children.

### Can I foster if I do not have British citizenship?

Any issues or questions around citizenship/residence/ immigration/ right to remain/settled status should be raised at the earliest opportunity, so that these can be considered in the context of you being able to meet the needs of a child and offer them stability.

## As a foster carer you will need to:

- make sure the child has a healthy lifestyle, attends school and receives any educational or medical support they need;
- establish a routine and set boundaries for behaviour;
- enable the child to maintain contact with their family;
- help the child build healthy relationships with others;
- speak up on the child's behalf to make sure they receive the care and support they are entitled to;
- work as part of a team with other care professionals; and
- keep written records about the child.



# Becoming a foster carer

## Your journey to becoming a foster carer

By reading this guide, you've already taken the first step towards becoming a foster carer. We hope it's inspired you to take a few more. There are quite a few stages on the journey to becoming an approved foster carer.

The process to becoming a foster carer can take up to six months. We need to make sure that vulnerable children will be safe, protected and well cared for in your

home, and you need to make sure that fostering is right for you and your family. We'll assess whether you are able to care for other people's children and understand how it feels for children to be separated from their own families.

Here is a brief guide to the steps involved:

The first step is to have a telephone conversation with one of our fostering support workers who specialise in following up on enquiries. They will arrange to visit you - this could either be at your home, or virtually - to answer any questions or concerns you may have as well as to find out more about you and your family.

If we agree to move forward, you'll be invited to attend one of our Skills to Foster preparation training groups along with other people who are applying to be foster carers. Currently we are delivering most of our initial training online, though we will hold some sessions at local venues in the near future.



Next, we'll ask you to complete a formal application form - this is the start of Stage 1 of the process. We will undertake statutory checks on you, and anyone else in your household aged over 18, with the Disclosure and Barring Service, education and health services and your GP. You'll also need to nominate a number of personal referees that we can contact.

Stage 2 begins when the full assessment starts. One of our social workers will, over a number of visits, explore all the issues involved with becoming a foster carer and how it will impact on you and your family. They will compile a report that you can comment on. The completed assessment is then considered formally and a decision reached about whether to approve you as a foster carer. A recommendation is also made about the age, number of children and type of foster care most suitable for you.

Once approved, you're then ready to start fostering. In your first year there is a training programme consisting of seven training courses, which we expect new carers to complete, and after that we hope you will attend regular training events and support groups.

As a minimum level we require attendance at three events every year. We'll continue to provide support and training throughout your fostering career to make sure you're fully equipped to provide the best possible care.

All Fostering North Yorkshire foster carers are supported by experienced fostering social workers, ensuring carers are part of a professional team wrapped around foster placements and the children placed within them.





# Fostering in North Yorkshire

**There are several types of foster care you could provide, depending on what works best for you and your family. We will work with you to decide what age group, gender or number of children you're best suited to look after.**

## Brothers and sisters

It's really important for brothers and sisters to stay together, so we need some of our foster carers to be able to look after more than one child. It can be very distressing for children to be separated from their siblings, so we need to make sure wherever possible that brothers and sisters can comfort and support each other at such a difficult time.

## Teenagers

As we all know, teenage years can be a difficult time: confusing, emotional and challenging. Imagine how a young person going through

family breakdown or upheaval will feel - so it's really important for them to get the support and stability they need to help them make the right life choices and reach their full potential.

## Unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Local authorities across the country are taking part in the resettlement of unaccompanied asylum seeking children - young people aged under 18 who are applying for asylum and have no relative or guardian in this country. These young people are often fleeing conflict or persecution in countries including Afghanistan and Eritrea. Some have been living in camps in Northern Europe. They will mostly be arriving with few belongings and sometimes little grasp of the English language.

Foster carers for these children will need to be welcoming, open to learning about new cultures, and able to nurture and encourage them to settle in to life in a new country. Our locally based social work teams, networks of foster carers and quality training will ensure you receive all the support you need.

## Short-term fostering

Most of the children who need foster care require a place to stay for a short period, usually between three months and two years. This is while their situation is assessed and long-term arrangements are made, whether the children are going back to their families or moving on to adoption. Foster carers need to be able to make children feel safe and at home during this time, and to help day-to-day life carry on as well as possible.



## Permanent fostering

Sometimes, children are unable to return to live with their family and will either be placed with adopters or looked after by foster carers until they reach adulthood. Providing stability, care and support throughout childhood is one of the most rewarding aspects of permanent or long-term foster care, helping vulnerable children grow into happy and secure young adults.

## Emergency fostering

Sometimes children need somewhere to stay at very short notice and for just a few days. This could start at the weekend or in the middle of the night, so carers offering emergency placements need to be flexible and ready for action.

## Respite fostering

Carers and parents may need breaks, too. Our respite fostering service gives those looking after children the chance to recharge their batteries, and can also ease situations where illness or family breakdown are a feature. Respite fostering can offer regular breaks from home, for a few days at a time, thus enabling children and young people to live with their own family for the rest of the time.

## Family Based Overnight Short Breaks

Family Based Overnight Short Breaks give disabled children the chance to spend quality time outside of their own family. It can also help them to become more independent, widen their horizons and form new friendships. At the same time, their families get a regular break from the demands of caring for a disabled child, and a much needed chance to recharge their batteries. Family Based Overnight Short Breaks foster carers provide care and support to children with a wide range of additional needs. These could include some physical and/or learning disabilities, or they may be on the autism spectrum. Foster carers able to offer between 100 and 200 nights of care per annum would be able to join our Specialist Overnight Short Breaks team of carers and receive a higher level of remuneration.

## No Wrong Door

Sitting alongside our fostering team is our unique 'No Wrong Door' (NWD) service. NWD is centred on two 'hubs' in Harrogate and Scarborough, and is designed to replace all traditional council run children's homes in the county.

The NWD team includes a number of hub community families and high needs supported lodgings hosts. These placements are part of, and supported by, the hub teams. In addition to this they are also supported by a Life Coach (Clinical Psychologist) and Communication Support Worker (Speech and Language Therapist).

## Hub Community Families

A hub community family provides accommodation and support (within a family home) to young people with complex needs. This allows our young people to 'try out' a foster placement and get used to moving on from residential care. Placements will be planned and can be on a short term, medium term, or respite basis dependent on the young person's circumstances and their care plan.

## High Needs Supported Lodgings Hosts

Our high needs supported lodgings hosts provide homes for young people who have had a challenging and troubled background. Being a supported lodgings host can be a challenging but rewarding role, and in return we provide full training and round-the-clock support. There is a generous financial allowance and there will also be an opportunity to work paid shifts in one of our hubs.

# Progressing as a foster carer

All Fostering North Yorkshire foster carers are supported by experienced fostering social workers and fostering support workers, ensuring carers are part of a professional team wrapped round foster placements and the children placed within them. We also support foster carers who wish to adopt.

Progressing as a foster carer Fostering North Yorkshire has four categories of foster carers:

- Pre-accredited.
- Accredited.
- Advanced.
- Specialist.

Each category has minimum entry requirements and also allows existing carers to progress to a higher category if they have the skills, and if there is a vacancy in the category they wish to move to.

**New foster carers start off as 'pre-accredited' and can progress to become 'accredited' by completing our mandatory training and learning. You then become eligible for accredited levels of payment.\***

## Fee based foster care

Once you have experience of fostering a range of children and have undergone extensive training and learning, you may wish to consider applying to become a fee-based advanced or specialist foster carer.

North Yorkshire offers different types of fee-based care, depending on the young people's level of need, as follows:

## Advanced fostering

This is full-time care for children over 10 who have complex needs, such as challenging behaviour, disabilities or medical conditions. Advanced foster carers will have undergone additional training to ensure that they have the skills and experience needed to give these children a safe and happy home. An additional fee is also paid to advanced carers.

## Specialist Fostering

Specialist foster carers provide care for our most challenging children, and must undergo further training to develop their skills beyond those of advanced carers. Normally at least one carer would need to be at home full-time to be a specialist foster carer in order to be able to carry out the tasks required, such as to support a teenager who has not been to school for some time, and may have been excluded, back into education and into a positive routine. A higher fee is paid to specialist carers.

To find out more about payment levels, see 'Financial support'.



# What people have told us

*“The Fostering team is an absolute privilege and delight to be working alongside. They are such outstanding people.”*

*“Our Social worker is always so supportive, understanding and one of the most astute people I have ever met.”*

*“It’s important children stay near to their homes where possible, fostering for your council makes that easier to achieve and it means children can still see their families, go to the same school, and keep the same friends.”*



# Support and training

**Fostering is rewarding, but not easy. That's why we'll make sure you get lots of support and ongoing training to provide the best possible care.**

Here's a summary of some of the support available:

## Your fostering social worker

Your social worker will provide advice and support before, during and after a child is placed with you. They will help make decisions about which children will be matched with you and will be there to support you during each placement.

## The child's social worker

The child's social worker will help you to understand and respond to the child's needs and behaviour and will visit regularly to see them. They are there to look after the best interests of the child and will help you to meet them.

## Training

We provide a full programme of courses to help you develop your skills after you've been approved. As a new foster carer you will be issued with a Development Pathway to guide you through the training and learning requirements and opportunities, and a Training Passport in which to record the different courses and learning events you attend. All foster carers complete an individualised personal development plan, which is considered with you at every annual review.

## Support groups

At regular group sessions you'll be able to share ideas, concerns and advice with other foster carers. Our existing foster carers are often more than happy to share their experiences and the network can be a huge support to new carers. We provide regular training and have formal and informal support groups, family fun days out and social events. We also run support groups for children who foster, recognising the important part they play in accepting other children into their home and sharing their parents.

## Peer support through mentoring

Through our mentoring scheme, we put new foster carers in touch with more experienced (often, but not necessarily advanced or specialist) carers who make themselves available to help guide you through that first year when fostering is strange and new to you and you are completing your mandatory training and learning.

## The Fostering Network and Foster Talk

Fostering North Yorkshire will pay for household membership of one of these support organisations with the local Foster Carer Association that deciding which organisation all foster carers in their locality will join.

**“But even now my foster mum is the person that I turn to when I need advice...”**

# Fostering Payments

All foster carers receive payments to cover the cost of caring for a child. Two weeks holiday, birthday and Christmas allowances are also paid. Child's age-related payments and premiums for pre-accredited and accredited foster carers are shown below, rounded to the nearest pound.

1 Age ranges	2 Weekly rates (all foster carers, including pre-accredited receive per placement)	3 Weekly age-related fees (only accredited foster carers receive, per placement)	4 Sub total per week per placement (accredited carers only)	5 Festival, birthday and two weeks holiday allowances (shown as annual amount)	6 Total per year (amount shown relates to accredited carers, based on a 52 week placement)
0-4	£182	£66	£248	£728	£13,606
5-10	£207	£98	£289	£830	£15,851
11-15	£252	£78	£356	£1032	£19,553
16+	£314	£115	£429	£1256	£23,548

In addition to the weekly rates (in column 2 above) advanced and specialist foster carers are also paid the skills fees shown below:

## Advanced and Specialist Fostering Scheme Fee Payments 2020-21

Advanced	£254.90
Specialist	£583.84

## No Wrong Door Foster Carers

No Wrong Door Foster Carers are paid at the Specialist rates shown above. In addition, they are paid the current hourly rate for sessions worked in the NWD residential hubs.

**Family Based Overnight Short Breaks Placements** - Traditional and Specialist - Fostering North Yorkshire runs a county wide Short Breaks service for disabled children.

Traditional and Specialist Short Break Scheme Payments (Allowances and Fee)		
Intensity of care (as assessed by the Disabled Children and Young People's Service)	24 hour period short break allowance (for both short break and specialist short break)	Calculation for additional weekly fee
Regular (for up to 24 hours)	£44.60	$\frac{200 \text{ 'nights' care} + 15 \text{ 'nights' annual leave}^1}{365 \text{ days a year}} \times £583.84^2 = £343.91$
Significant (for up to 24 hours)	£63.71	
Exceptional (for up to 24 hours)	£89.22	

For periods of care longer than 24 hours, up to 6 hours of Day Care can be claimed (at £8.40 per hour). This is to accommodate children/young people being dropped off at, for example, 10.00a.m. on the first day and not being collected until 4.00p.m. – 5.00p.m. on the last day of the short break. For introductory (often teatime) visits the Day Care rate of £8.40 per hour can be utilised.

# Fostering Payment Examples

There is no set foster carer payment because the money received depends on a range of factors. This can include how many children are being fostered, their needs and requirements and your unique skill set.

We divide our payments to foster carers into three categories:

- Fostering Allowance or Intensity of Care Allowance (for short breaks for disabled children)
- Accredited Premium
- Fees – Advanced, Specialist, Specialist Short Break and “No Wrong Door”

The Fostering Allowance and Accredited Premium depends on the age of the child


Here are some examples as to what payments could be received.

Please see the Fostering Payments page for a fuller breakdown of the Allowances, Premiums and Fees available.

**Beth is a single carer, she fosters Jadon who is 8 years old. As an accredited foster carer she receives around £290 each week, plus extra payments to cover birthdays, holidays, Christmas (or other festivals) and mileage expenses.**

**Tom and Sarah foster siblings Chloe and Marlon, aged 9 and 12. They receive Allowances and Accredited Premiums of £645 each week, as well as extra payments to cover birthdays, holidays, Christmas (or other festivals) and mileage expenses.**

**Gill is a specialist foster carer who with her husband Paul foster Ross, who is aged 14. They receive an Allowances and Fee of over £840 each week, plus additional amounts for birthdays, holidays, Christmas (or other festivals) and mileage expenses.**



“Before living with my foster family there had been some really difficult times - but my life’s now back on track and I feel like I have a future - and now I’m getting attention for all the right reasons”

## Contact us

**Fostering North Yorkshire**

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