Fostering

THINK ABOUT IT

www.eastriding.gov.uk/fostering
“East Riding of Yorkshire Council fostering service seeks to deliver good outcomes for children and young people from high quality and positive care placements delivered by committed, enthusiastic, knowledgeable and skilled carer/staff/foster panel partnerships.”
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Why foster for East Riding of Yorkshire Council?

With the support and guidance of East Riding of Yorkshire Council’s fostering service, we will work with you through your fostering career and endeavour to make fostering the most fulfilling and rewarding experience you have ever had.

Together we can do it...
There are many reasons why people choose to foster with East Riding of Yorkshire Council including:

Training
We provide an ongoing high quality training programme to ensure you have the tools to enable you to meet the demands of the fostering task.

Support
We offer comprehensive support and you will have your own dedicated social worker to offer you practical and emotional support when you need it.

For children of families who foster
Being part of a family that fosters can be really fun and rewarding, but sometimes it can be a challenge and hard to share mum or dad. The participation and rights team provides support services and training for these children.

Generous allowances
We provide a generous allowance to support the children while in the care of the foster family and additional payments to match the growing skills of foster carers.

Events
The team organises a variety of events such as Christmas parties, theme park visits, Go Ape, sports days, conferences and Balls. There are also local support groups available for foster carers to attend.

“In a recent survey, 100% of East Riding foster carers said they would recommend fostering through East Riding Council.”
**What is fostering?**

Fostering is a way of caring for a child or young person in your own home at a time when their parents/family are unable to do so. Foster carers can be sole carers or a couple. Foster carers play a vital role in providing fostering placements in a safe, secure and stable environment.

Fostering may be required because the parents are going through a difficult period, or perhaps the child has been abused or neglected. The reason for a child or young person being fostered is rarely related to themselves, and in the end many will return to their birth families.

Alternatively, some children and young people fostered may continue to receive long term support, either through a long term fostering placement, adoption, or through being helped to live independently.

Foster care placements can last for varying durations of time, from days to years.

Fostering is highly regulated and is subject to compliance with the National Minimum Standards 2011 and Fostering Regulations 2011. East Riding of Yorkshire Council fostering service is registered with Ofsted and subject to regular inspections.

**Why are children fostered?**

There is no typical child in need of fostering; they could be any age and come from any social class or ethnicity, however they come from families who are not currently able to give them the care they deserve.

This can be for any number of reasons, ranging from illness and depression, to drug abuse or a basic inability to look after the child properly. When a family has problems, our children’s services are committed to working with the parent or parents to make the home a safe place for the child. While that is taking place we need to place the child in a family situation where they will be safe and cared for.

That’s where foster carers come in and the most important thing is that you can provide a home for the child in which they’ll feel stable, cared for and safe – a place where they can develop naturally as a person and feel part of the family.
Different types of fostering

We understand that every child and young person will have completely different needs. Some may need a foster placement for a few nights while others will need a more permanent family environment.

During your assessment and training we will help you prepare for the different types of placement and find out which works best for you.

Fostering need not be a 24 hour, seven days a week commitment. The most important thing for you as a potential foster carer is to find the right type of fostering that suits you and your family.

There are many different types of fostering you may wish to consider including:

**Longer term**
Some parents are unable to look after their own children at all, and despite loving them, they are unable to offer them a safe and secure home. In these cases it is impossible to return the child to their parents to live and they may need to be looked after for an extended period. During this extended period of care, it will be imperative that you help the child retain links with their family where appropriate.

**Emergency/short term**
Ranging from an overnight stay to three months or longer, usually resulting from problems or illness in a family, or the child/children being harmed or abused. Whilst the child remains with you, you'll help them understand what is happening and offer them support and reassurance.

**Sibling groups**
Keeping children together when their families are under stress can really reduce the worry and upset they feel.

**Teenagers**
Teenagers need carers who are patient, understanding and flexible but are also able to lay down clear boundaries. They need someone who is able to listen and help make sense of their world. East Riding of Yorkshire Council’s pathway team offers very specialised support and information through ‘pathway plans’ for all looked after young people over 16 years of age.

**Parent and child arrangements**
Being a parent is a daunting task. If you are young and alone having a baby on your own can be terrifying. If you can offer support to a young mother or father or expectant mother we would love to hear from you.

**Special needs**
Children with special needs, whether physical, behavioural or learning difficulties, require special love, care and attention. You may find yourself working closely with educational or medical staff. You will receive all the support that you need.

**Respite placements**
Just one weekend a month or an occasional couple of weeks will give our valued foster carers a well deserved and much appreciated break. It also gives foster children the chance to experience variety and make new friends.

**Permanency**
This is a commitment to care for a child throughout their childhood and on into their adult life.
“We wanted to help children and families who were going through difficult times and we had the room in our hearts and in our home as a family. It’s been a joy to be part of the ‘happy ever after’ whatever that means for the individual child.”

Lynette, foster carer
“When we first went into fostering it was to offer a home for a child who needed it, whether it was a couple of days or much longer. The highlights are seeing really good adoptive matches and learning new things through working with a range of professionals.”

Luke, foster carer

Can I foster?

You don’t need to have had children, but need to be over 21 (those under 25 should have some appropriate life experience), a spare room and an understanding of children. Couples with families, couples without families, single, heterosexual, lesbian or gay people can be foster parents. Unmarried couples or those in a civil partnership can also apply to foster jointly.

The decision to become a foster carer is not one to be taken lightly, the work although rewarding, can also be demanding. More than any other experience in your life, becoming a foster carer will bring enormous changes for both you and your family.

All sorts of needs have to be taken into consideration when a foster child lives with you, such as:

- stability
- security
- a nurturing environment
- contact with the birth family.

Most people are suitable to foster and we recognise that families come in all shapes and sizes.

Your circumstances:

- ✔️ I have the flexibility to commit to fostering
- I have a spare room which can be made pleasant for a child or young person
- My home is clean and comfortable
- I have access to transport
- I have a good network of people around me to provide encouragement and support
- If I have a partner or other people in my household, they are on board
What skills and qualities do I need?

You need to think about whether your circumstances are right to become a foster carer - or whether you can adapt your circumstances accordingly.

We therefore insist that our foster carers have the time and availability for the commitment that fostering requires - most fostered children will have missed out on parental time and will need your fullest care and attention. You must be prepared to be there for them at all times and under all circumstances.

Looking after any child involves juggling a number of responsibilities. As a foster carer we ask you to take on a lot and a good foster carer will need to have certain skills and qualities.

You need to be able to accept children and their families, the backgrounds they may come from and the different abilities they have. It is important to treat everyone with the same respect whilst seeing everyone as individuals.

Looking at children involves having a good sense of humour to manage the day-to-day things that children do!

Feeling comfortable with children is obviously key. Could you help put a child at ease and make them feel a part of your family?

Social and family life should be fun! We want foster carers to take children on days out and give them great experiences they might not have had before.

You will be someone who is sensitive to children and can help them to open up to an adult and develop trust.

You might meet some children who may have challenging behaviour as a result of their life experiences. Foster carers see children as individuals, seeing beyond behaviour and looking at the child within.

“You need to be able to accept children and their families, the backgrounds they may come from and the different abilities they have. It is important to treat everyone with the same respect whilst seeing everyone as individuals.’

Lynette, foster carer
The assessment process

We aim to complete your assessment within four to eight months. This may seem like a long time but we need to make sure that fostering is right for you and your family. It is important that you have all the information you need to begin to foster. You will be supported and guided along the way to help you succeed. To become an approved foster carer you will need to complete a two stage assessment process.

Stage one

- A telephone call from yourself, an online enquiry or attendance at one of our fostering information events. A fostering information pack will be sent to you or given out at the information event.

- A member of the team will contact you to discuss initial questions or queries and make an initial assessment on the suitability of your enquiry.

- Following your registration of interest, an initial home visit will be carried out by one of our care coordinators. This will be at your home to meet with you and begin to get to know you and the sort of foster care you could potentially provide.

- We will then invite you to attend one of our ‘skills to foster’ courses which we run five or six times a year. All applicants need to attend as part of their assessment and this will help you decide if fostering is right for you and your family. There is also an opportunity for your children to be involved and attend our one day children’s skills course to learn more about fostering.

Stage one includes basic information on you and your family such as:

- Checks and references obtained from the local authority
- Medical reports
- DBS checks (Disclosure and Barring Service)
- Two personal references

We will always request your written consent before undertaking any safeguarding checks. You will be informed of the decision as to whether you have successfully completed stage one within 10 working days of the information being received.
Stage two

The second stage includes more detailed information on you and your family including your skills, competence, lifestyle and potential to care for a child placed with you effectively.

This stage also includes undertaking a risk assessment and health and safety checks.

- A fostering social worker will come and visit you and your family regularly and you will work together to complete a report called BAAF Form F. The discussions you have will be based around the tasks involved in fostering such as; caring for children in a family setting, providing a safe and caring environment, and working as part of a team.

- When stages one and two are complete your social worker will submit a report to the fostering panel who will decide whether or not you are suitable to become a foster carer. If all has gone well then you will soon be welcoming a child or children into your home.
“I find the training invaluable, gaining not only insight into children, but also people in general and I have gained a much deeper appreciation of why people behave the way they do. It has been a journey of discovery that I have enjoyed travelling down.”

Alison, foster carer

The training

Recognising that fostering is very much a career, every foster carer will receive training both before and after they ‘qualify’ as a foster carer. Our ‘skills to foster’ training provides prospective foster carers with an insight into the role of foster care.

All prospective carers will complete this training before being approved as a foster carer. All foster carers in England are required to progress to the post approval core training programme within the first year of approval, and complete the training, support and development standards for foster care.

On completion of the course you will progress to a level one carer. All foster carers are expected to undertake a minimum of training to ensure they are able to foster confidently.

The training is held frequently and is very accessible. Additional training is offered in a broad range of subjects that will support foster carers’ development and help them achieve the best outcomes for the children in their care and develop themselves and their own skills.

There are also opportunities to specialise in areas where you have a particular talent or interest and also support other foster carers to grow and develop.
Quotes

From children looked after in foster care

“I can’t fault them; my foster carers always look out for me and are always there for me.”

“Everything good describes my foster carers. They are wonderful and helpful.”

“She was the only Mum I had and treated me like her own daughter. She helped me in big ways.”
Frequently asked questions

Do I have the skills needed to foster?
Very few carers start out with all the skills required for the job. Our training programme will help equip you with what you need when you need it.

You don’t need any formal qualifications and there is no upper age limit. You may be married, single, with or without children, living together, separated, divorced or widowed. However, what you must have is the drive, enthusiasm and endless energy to make sure children excel.

Can I cope emotionally?
You’ll learn to cope with most situations as you go along. There will be upsetting times – perhaps when the child eventually moves on – but you’ll get plenty of support. There will also be many times when fostering is great fun and personally rewarding.

Can I cope with a child whose behaviour is challenging?
Some children’s behaviour is confusing and difficult to manage and our network of professionals will work alongside you to achieve positive change. You will be amazed at what you can manage.

Your training will prepare you for most things. And remember, you’ll never be on your own – there is a network of fellow carers who can help. You will be able to discuss any worries you may have.

Is my home suitable?
The most important ingredient in fostering is you – not the size of your home or whether you own or rent it. The child will need a safe and welcoming environment with their own room.

What affect will fostering have on my own family?
Fostering will affect everyone involved – inside and outside the home. Talking about fostering to the whole family means you find out how they feel about sharing time, sharing space and perhaps toys as well. Having a strong support network will help.

How much will I know about the child or young person before they are placed with me?
We believe it’s essential for foster carers to be provided with as much information as possible about a child prior to placement. In short, whatever we know you know too. But let’s be honest, we won’t know everything – after all neither you nor we will have lived with the child before. So as well as finding out everything we can before you meet them we’ll also train you so you know how to keep everyone safe and how to fill in the gaps to help your child as well.

I am already a foster carer, can I move agencies?
As an existing foster carer, we try to make things as quick and easy as possible for you to transfer to us. If you are looking to change from your current agency or local authority the first thing to do is to get in touch with us and we’ll arrange to visit you at home to have a chat about what’s involved.

Can I still go out to work if I become a foster carer?
Fostering does not necessarily require foster carers to be at home full-time, different children will have different needs; the important thing is that you can be flexible to meet those needs at times such as school holidays and to attend meetings. The fostering payments we provide may give you the flexibility to look at how you manage your working hours. Do not rule yourself out because you work.

My son who lives with us smokes; will this affect our application?
If anyone in your house smokes or vapes you cannot be considered to care for children under five years. Foster carers who smoke occasionally should always smoke outdoors. If you are in the process of quitting, you will need to consult your GP and provide evidence that you have given up smoking for at least six months prior to your application.
Can my own children share a bedroom so that our family can foster?
We would not consider it appropriate for your own children to move and share a bedroom with each other so that you can foster. If they are currently sharing this would need to be discussed with you further.

What if I need to make a compliment or complaint?
East Riding of Yorkshire Council aims to provide high quality services but acknowledges that things can occasionally go wrong. Or you may wish to tell us if we have succeeded in providing a high quality service, a member of staff has impressed you or just to comment on how we could improve on our services. Please let us know by contacting us on:

(01482) 396422

customer.relations@eastriding.gov.uk

“I am a single parent, work full time in teaching and am the wrong side of 50, so I wasn’t sure if I would be eligible, however, this was no problem. I have now been approved for a long term placement and I can’t tell you the difference her arrival has made to my life. My life now has a new purpose and I don’t regret my decision for one moment!”

Alison, foster carer
Contact us

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“Fostering changed my life, truly; the children have given as much back to me as I’ve given to them. I can’t imagine being without children in my home and I am proud to be able to provide for their needs.”

Paul, foster carer.