

Quarriers

Fostering with Quarriers

Information pack

A specialised service for children and young people with complex needs and disabilities



It's Quarriers' mission to transform lives. You can be part of this by becoming a foster carer. Many families need the vital support that foster carers offer. Thank you so much for taking the first steps towards fostering. Quarriers will be with you every step of the way.

What is fostering?

Fostering is a way of providing a family life for children and young people in your own home when they cannot live with their birth family. It can make positive and lasting differences to the lives of children and young people.

Fostering can be used to provide short-term care for children and young people while their parents get help to deal with their problems.

Some children and young people may be able to return home once the problems that caused them to come into foster care have been resolved and it is clear that their parents are able to look after them safely.

Other children and young people may stay in long-term foster care, some may be adopted, and others will move on to live independently.

Children and young people with a variety of complex needs can benefit from a period of respite that short-break foster carers can offer.

Foster carers play a vital role in providing a safe, secure and stable fostering environment for children and young people, which encourages positive and brighter futures.



Quarriers Fostering Service

Quarriers is aiming to provide a fostering service for children and young people with complex needs and disabilities, challenging behaviours, autism and Asperger's syndrome for example. This will be a small, specialised fostering service, providing long term care for children and young people, supported by residential and family based respite services.

What types of fostering can you do with Quarriers?

Fostering

Carers are required to look after children and young people with disabilities and complex needs while plans are made for the children's future. That could be either to return them to the care of birth family members or to prepare them for a move to a permanent placement or adoption.

Long-term/permanent fostering

Some children and young people with disabilities and complex needs require long-term or permanent placements. For a number of reasons these children or young people cannot be adopted. This might be because they are older children, or because they continue to have very frequent contact with relatives. It is important that these children and young people are able to live with long-term or permanent foster carers until they reach adulthood and make the transition to independent living or to other specialised resources which meet their needs.

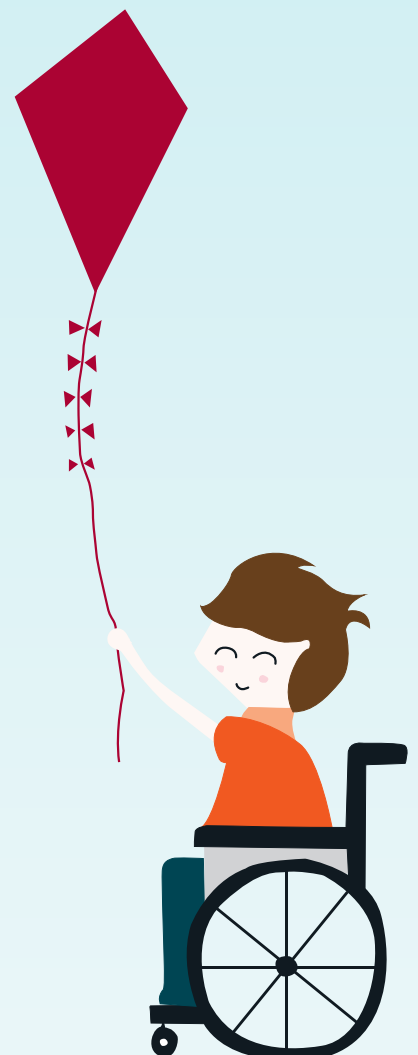
Short-break/respite fostering

Children or young people with a variety of needs, behavioural or emotional difficulties can enjoy a short stay on a pre-planned, regular basis with another family.

Who can foster?

Foster carers come from all kinds of ethnic, religious, cultural and language backgrounds and as long as you're over 21 years old:

- you may be single, living with a partner, or married
- you may have children or step-children or you may have no children at all
- you may be a tenant or a home-owner
- you may live in a flat or a house
- you may or may not be in paid employment



What do foster carers do?

As a foster carer, you need to be committed to providing high quality care and support to vulnerable children. Below are some of the tasks and responsibilities involved in working with children.

Ensure the safety of children

The safety and well-being of children is always of utmost importance. You need to be alert to all kinds of risks to which children can be exposed. Thought needs to be given to ways in which children can be protected and, as far as possible, learn to safeguard themselves against unnecessary risks. This may be particularly significant if a child has experienced abuse in the past. Children with disabilities are especially vulnerable to abuse. There is a strong emphasis on safe care practice throughout your training, which you're expected to understand and practice, and this training is followed up through ongoing support by your supervising social worker.

Work in partnership with Quarriers and others

Every child who is looked after by Quarriers has a local authority social worker who works in partnership with Quarriers and will visit you and the child, as well as work with the child's family. You need to keep Quarriers and the social worker up to date with the child's progress, to keep records, and sometimes to prepare reports for meetings to discuss the future plans for the child. Likewise, the social worker is a key person who will work in partnership with you. You can expect Quarriers staff and the child's social worker to keep you up to date with significant developments in the child's family, to advise you of any changes that need to be made to the plans or visiting arrangements, and any special needs the child has.

Help children make the most of their education

Children's education can be disrupted by the changes that have occurred. You should encourage school attendance, achievement, and extra curricular learning experiences, and support children with their homework. This may involve a lot of contact with schools and health agencies. Quarriers will support and work closely with you.

Promote the physical and mental health of children

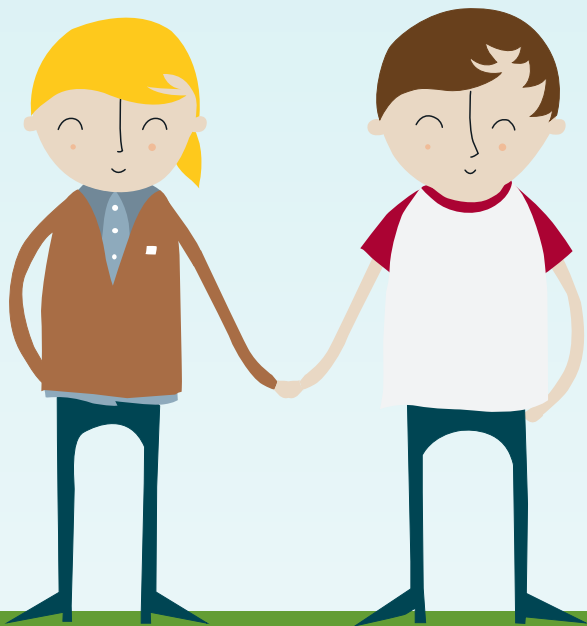
Good diet, regular dental checks and plenty of exercise are part of the general well-being of children that you need to promote. In addition, listening to children's concerns supportively and reassuring them when they are anxious is important for their emotional health. Children who are looked after may have many fears about what will happen to them and their families, and you have an important role in helping them communicate these feelings.

Keep information confidential

Confidentiality of information about children and their families is also very important. It protects the children and their families and it helps build trust. There may be times when that confidentiality has to be broken – for example, to protect a child from risk – and it is crucial that you learn what to say, when, and to whom. Training for protecting children and young people is provided.

Involve the whole family

When you care for a child, your own family is involved automatically. This has an impact on your family and can put pressure on relationships in the home, especially if your own children feel they are losing out. Training and support is provided to ensure that the impact is manageable for you and your family.



Comfort and reassurance

Children who are looked after will need to be comforted and may need to be reassured that their family still cares about them even though they are not currently looking after them. At times, distress and anxiety can lead children to behave in difficult ways. You play a key role in helping children understand what is happening in their lives and finding ways to cope positively with their situation.

Acknowledge and respect heritage

In the same way that all carers have a specific cultural, religious and ethnic background, so too do all children. You need to ensure that their culture is treated with respect, that their cultural traditions are recognised and encouraged, and that there are opportunities for children (as much as possible) to participate in their usual cultural and religious activities whilst they are living with carers.

Welcome and encourage family contact and visits

Parents often feel very vulnerable, deskilled and guilty when their children are looked after by someone else. You can play a key role in helping parents recognise how important they remain to their children. Where it is agreed, you can encourage contact between children and their families by welcoming family visits in your home. You can also help families keep in touch with their children through telephone conversations, sending cards and exchanging photos. You are a vital link in giving families information about the well-being and progress of their children, whether in terms of physical development or educational attainment.

Fostering frequently asked questions

We appreciate that you may have a few unanswered questions, require a quick recap or like to find out more information so we have included a list of the most frequently asked questions.

What is fostering?

Fostering is looking after someone else's child in your own home when they are unable to live with their birth family.

Who can apply to be a foster carer?

You can be married or single; you can be living alone or with your partner of either the same or opposite sex; you can have your own children or not; you can be employed or unemployed. You must be over 21 and you must be fit and well and have a spare room suitable for a child or young person. Applications from all ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds are welcome, as are those from applicants with a disability. There is no upper age limit for people to foster but you need to be fit enough to care for children/young people.

What about accommodation?

You will need a spare room for the foster child.

What type of checks would be carried out on me and my home?

As part of our assessment we will carry out Local Authority, Health Service and Education department enquiries. You will also be assessed under the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme, which was formerly known as a police check, or in England a CRB check. You will attend a medical and it would be helpful if you could advise us of any outstanding medical issues.

We will undertake a very thorough Health and Safety Check within your house to ensure that it meets the necessary requirements, such as a fire safety check.

We will request references from previous employers and personal references from two people who have known you for 5 years or more. We will also request a reference from an ex-employer if you have previously worked with children and young people. In most circumstances we will contact ex-partners. We will contact your children's school for references.

We will carry out police and health records checks on all adult members of your household.

Can I foster if I have health issues?

As part of the assessment all applicants undergo a medical to check if you are fit to foster. The medical is carried out by your GP and then the report is sent to our medical advisor for his/her views about your physical and emotional health. The medical report will determine whether your medical condition would have a detrimental effect on your ability to foster, or if fostering would have a detrimental impact on your condition. Please tell us if you have a medical condition as we may decide to carry out an early medical assessment prior to starting the home study.

Can I foster if I have a criminal conviction?

As part of the assessment all applicants undergo an enhanced Disclosure Scotland check through the PVG scheme (or CRB check for England). All previous criminal convictions need to be acknowledged and discussed.

There are some convictions that would prevent you from fostering. Please tell us about your situation because your particular conviction may not affect your application and other factors such as your age when the offence took place will be taken into consideration.

It is in your interest to disclose any reasons that could prevent you from fostering at this stage.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/children-families/pvglegislation

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/53/contents

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/crb/

What about smoking?

You need a smoke free environment. If you or anyone else in your household smoke, you will not be able to foster a child aged 0-5 years or a child who is not mobile or has complex health needs. Anyone who smokes should smoke outside the home.

How long will the assessment take?

The assessment process will take between 4-6 months. During this time you will be given information about what to expect and how fostering will affect you, your family and friends.

Quarriers will gather all of the relevant information about you, including checks and references. The social worker will visit you and your family at your home to carry out the home study.

You will be expected to contribute to the assessment process by working on the preparation materials, carrying out your own research, reading and doing exercises. The social worker will offer you support and guidance throughout the process.

How much fee/allowance will I receive?

Quarriers foster carers will receive a weekly allowance for the child. The fostering allowance takes into account food, clothing, basic travel, household bills and everyday living.

Foster carers are given a fee for fostering. This is generally tax free but you should check your personal circumstances.

Information and advice on taxation is available from the following websites:

www.direct.gov.uk

www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/foster-carers.htm

www.fostering.net

How long will it be until a child is placed

This is a very difficult question to answer as it could be weeks or even months until a suitable match is identified.

Will I get paid if I have no child living with me?

No.

What support will I receive?

You will receive both telephone and home visiting support from a Quarriers social worker. You will be able to access 24hr telephone support.

You will receive 3 weeks respite per year.

You will be required to attend a Quarriers' foster carer training programme.

You will be invited to attend support group meetings to meet and learn from other foster carers.

You will be invited to attend organised special activities for yourself, your family and the children that are in your care such as fun days and children's groups.

You will be registered as a member of The Fostering Network – an independent agency offering training and support to foster carers.

www.fostering.net



Assessment and preparation

We consider that looking after other people's children is one of the most important jobs anyone can do, so we take the task of assessing and preparing foster carers very seriously.

We need to ensure people are well prepared and we also need to be satisfied that people have the necessary skills and knowledge required to care for a foster child. All carers undertake preparation training and induction training.

On average it takes approximately 6 months for the process to be completed and we have included a flowchart which shows the various stages along with further information on each part of the process.

Other members of the household

When you apply to become a foster carer, we need to involve every member of your household in the assessment. This includes children and young people who live in the household. They will be interviewed (in your presence if appropriate) and involved in some of the assessment and preparation. This is to ensure that as far as possible we understand their views and that they are well prepared and informed. If you have children who are pre-nursery/pre-school, we will ask for a reference from the health visitor. If you have a child who is at school or nursery we contact the head teacher to seek their opinion about your wish to foster, the impact on your child and whether they have any concerns about your application.

Training

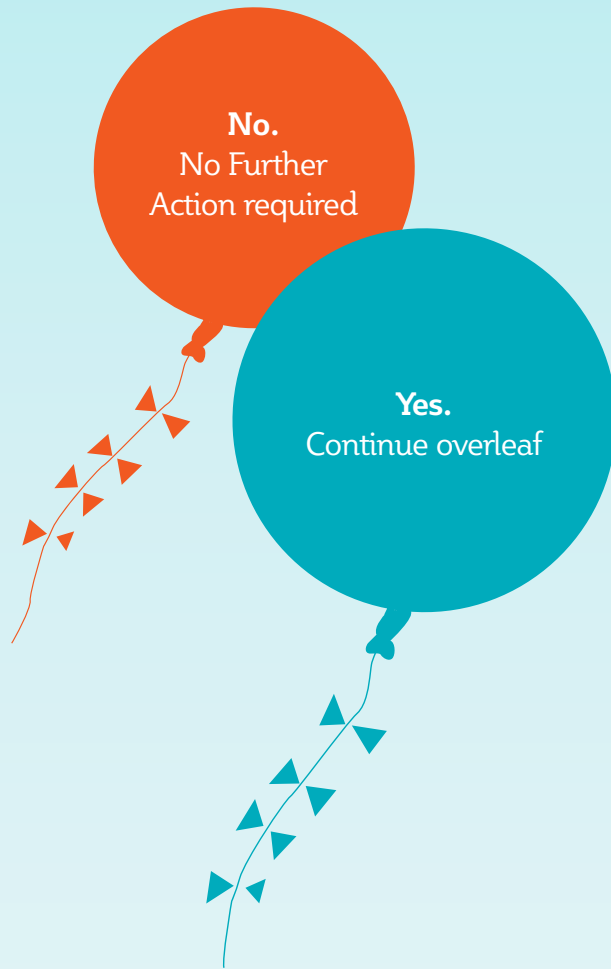
Each carer is required as part of their preparation to undergo a comprehensive training programme and following approval, induction training specific to your requirements.



The fostering process

Initial Process

1. Initial enquiry
2. Attend local information sessions
3. Home visit by Quarriers' social worker
4. Attend preparation groups
5. Initial assessment completed. Continue?



Assessment and approval

1. Complete application form
2. Complete assessment checks
 - Health
 - Police checks
 - Local authorities
3. References
 - Employer
 - Personal
4. Attend preparation groups (if not already attended)
5. Social worker carries out home study with applicants
6. Assessment report completed
7. Attend fostering panel. Approved?

No. Appeal the decision?

If unsuccessful
no further action.
If successful continue
to the next stage.

Yes. Continue with
next stage

Matching and linking

1. Customised induction training
2. Match with child / young person
3. Linking and planning meeting with relevant others inviting young person and their family
4. Introductions to child / young person including overnight stays



How to become a foster carer

Step 1: Initial enquiry made and information pack sent out.

Step 2: Attend local information session(s) to gain further details and ask questions.

Step 3: Home Visit made by Quarriers Social Worker.

Step 4: Attend preparation groups

The preparation groups consist of a number of sessions that examine various aspects of looking after children. The groups are usually made up of a small number of applicants and are facilitated by social workers and experienced foster carers.

Fill in application form; we then request the relevant assessment checks be carried out and send off for your personal and employer references.

Step 5: The home study

You are allocated a social worker to undertake a comprehensive assessment of your strengths, current skills and training needs, areas for improvement and family circumstances.

The home study usually takes eight to ten visits and a number of exercises are undertaken during this stage to help us gather evidence of skills and abilities.

Step 6: The fostering panel

Your allocated social worker writes a final report incorporating all the information gathered from the assessment and preparation process. This report is shared with you, signed and passed on to the members of the fostering panel, which is made up of a small group of people who are experienced in working with children who are looked after. You and your social worker attend the panel and a discussion is held on your suitability to look after children based on the evidence presented within the report.

The panel then recommends whether or not you should be approved to look after children and if so the age range, gender, number and kind of fostering.

Step 7: Match with child/ young person

Once the matching process is complete, the supervising social worker has an ongoing role to support you with the child or young person in placement. The supervising social worker will provide you and your family with regular supervision, which includes offering practical and emotional support and keeping in regular contact with you by phone, email and visits to your home. The supervising social worker will also help you identify training and support needs on an ongoing basis.

Step 8: Annual Review

Annual Reviews are held to find out how you and your family are managing the task of fostering. The review takes into account any changes to your circumstances and addresses your training needs.



Support and advice to foster carers

Fostering children and young people is a rewarding but difficult task so here are the four main areas of support that we offer to help you foster in a positive way.

Your supervising social worker

Once the matching process is complete and you are working with the child, the supervising social worker has an ongoing supporting role. This includes providing you with:

- regular supervision at least once a month but more frequently when required
- practical and emotional support
- information and equipment you need to care for the child/young person
- regular contact by phone, email and visits to your home

Foster carers support groups

These groups meet regularly to support each other and to:

- discuss and examine issues that arise whilst looking after children
- occasionally feature guest speakers and short presentations
- help carers make new friends, network and support other foster carers
- offer both practical and emotional support

Children and young people

Children and young people's support groups also provide support for the carers' birth children and the children and young people who are being looked after.

Training

Quarriers is committed to the continued development of its foster carers. You and your supervising social worker will identify your training needs on an ongoing basis. The amount of training varies from carer to carer depending on your individual needs, experience, level of availability and involvement. Training needs can be met in a number of ways:

- Attendance at Quarriers' training courses
- Meeting up with other foster carers at the foster carers' support groups
- Through your supervising social worker, or through courses offered by specialist organisations
- Participation in on-line training programmes

Support outwith office hours

After office hours Quarriers has an on-call service for foster carers run by social workers who can be contacted in the evenings or weekends for advice and guidance.

Other means of support

The foster carer forum on the website provides up to date information about any developments as well as contact and support with other carers.

Foster carers will be members of The Fostering Network where they can access independent advice, information and a free legal advice helpline.

