



Fostering Peterborough's Future

Help create a brighter future...

Fostering

We appreciate that choosing to foster a child or children is not a decision to be taken lightly. Many people may think about fostering for a long time before they contact us. We hope these pages will explain the different options available through the Peterborough City Council fostering team and you'll feel more informed and ready to take the next step.

Foster carers from all walks of life are needed to meet the diverse needs of our children. There are many children between the ages of 0-18 years who need foster carers for varying lengths of time in their lives. Fostering is more than just providing a comfortable home; you need to be able to listen, empathise and give the attention and support they need.

Children need foster care for a variety of reasons. Some families may have suffered a crisis and need help and support, or the child may have been subjected to neglect or abuse.

We welcome single people and couples regardless of gender or sexuality. This is irrespective of people's ethnicity, religion or disability. It is preferred that applicants are over the age of 21, have sufficient accommodation, a positive outlook, energy, enthusiasm and commitment. Our main concern is that you are able to help a child develop both emotionally and physically.

The fostering needs of children vary and we work to match the right people with the right child. We will be with you all of the way, offering help, encouragement, support and guidance. We will assist you through every aspect of the application process and beyond, and our commitment is to help make fostering a positive and rewarding experience for you and the child.

What is fostering?

Satisfying, rewarding and great fun. Fostering is about providing a caring and safe environment for children and young people, including those who have disabilities and/or challenging behaviour.

Fostering ranges from weekends, a few weeks, months or even on a long-term basis. With our support, you can care for a child or children placed in your home by the council. Working in partnership with the city council staff, the child's family and other professionals, you will help these children fulfill their potential and achieve security, stability and happiness.

Ultimately you'll provide a warm, caring and secure home to a child or children for as long as they need. Like all parenting it can be challenging but also one of the most rewarding things you can do.

Different types of fostering

The important thing for you is to find a way to care that suits you best and whichever area you choose, the one thing you can be certain of is that every child you help will benefit from your care and support. It's a hard decision to make if you don't know all the facts. So, to help you become that special person in a child's life, here are some brief descriptions of the types of care that you can offer.

Emergency fostering

The role of the emergency carer is to provide a safe home environment at very short notice, from just a few hours up to 72 hours. Arrangements are quickly made for children to return home or move on to time limited foster carers.

If you provide this type of fostering, you would need to be able to care for children from birth to 16 years of age. You would need to have had foster care experience before becoming an emergency carer.

Time limited fostering

Initially ranging from an overnight stay to a number of months, this usually results from difficulties in the family, or the child being harmed or abused in some way. Offering a safe place for them to live, you'll help them to understand what's happening and offer support, whilst the social worker engages with the family to return the child home as soon as possible.

Long-term fostering

Many parents, despite loving their children dearly, are unable to provide the care needed. In such cases, these children will not be able to live with their own families even though they may want to. You can help by offering a child the chance to grow up in a safe and supportive environment, where they'll receive care and attention and the opportunity to keep in touch with their family. Usually, experience of fostering is required before you can become a long-term carer.

Link care fostering

This involves having children with a disability to stay with you for a short time so that their families can have a regular break, and the children can make new friends and broaden their horizons. This care can range from a few hours each week to a weekend a month, for planned breaks and sometimes in an emergency.

Specialist fostering

Some children, usually over the age of 10 years, require experienced specialist care to meet their complex health needs and/or challenging behaviour. If you choose this challenging option you will need to be available full-time and will have a range of skills and experience of working with children.

Fostering groups of brothers and sisters

Staying together is very important to children who have had changes in their lives. They need the security and comfort of each other as much as they need you. We always need people to take on groups of brothers and sisters.

Fostering a mother and baby

You may feel able to help some mothers who need support and security and people who can teach and encourage them without taking over their responsibilities as mothers.

Every child has different needs, requiring many different forms of support, all equally important to them..



Your journey into fostering

If you've decided that fostering could be for you, there are a number of steps that need to be taken. Our fostering team will aim to take you through the process in approximately six months, following pre-approval training, called skills to foster.

- 1 You will be visited by a social worker who will have initial discussions with you about foster care. They'll give you details of the assessment process.
- 2 You will be asked to fill in an application form about yourself and other members of your household. This form gives the council permission to carry out criminal records bureau and other checks. We need to make sure that you've not committed any offences or actions that would disqualify you from fostering.
- 3 You'll be asked for proof of your identity (like a passport, birth or marriage certificate) and we will ask you to have a health check to show you don't have any major health problems.
- 4 You will receive an invitation to attend the mandatory pre-approval training, where you'll learn more about what's involved in fostering. This is also a chance to meet other people who are going through the process, and talk to experienced foster carers.
- 5 If you are successful on the course, you will be allocated a social worker who will carry out your personal assessment. They will explain the skills and qualities that foster carers need. They will also discuss how you can demonstrate your skills through practical examples of activities you're already involved in.
- 6 The social worker will conduct an in depth assessment which also looks at your life, family, values, skills and childhood experiences as well as the other members of your household. This assessment will cover a range of subjects relating to the needs of children who require fostering.
- 7 The city council will take up your personal and employer references. We will ask your permission to contact ex partners and adult children. The reasons for this will be exp the initial visit.



- 8 All the information gathered by the social worker is put into a report outlining your skills, your future training needs and areas where perhaps you need more help. You'll see the social worker's report and you can make your own comments in writing.
- 9 The social worker then presents the report to the fostering panel. You will be invited to the panel and there is an expectation that you will attend.
- 10 The panel will make a recommendation to the agency decision-maker whether or not to approve you as a foster carer and the number, age and gender of children you can foster. The agency decision-maker will then review the papers and the recommendations, advised by the panel, and give their final decision regarding approval within weeks of the panel date. If you are not approved, your social worker will discuss the reasons with you and we will write to you. You will be able to put forward your own views and appeal the decision, which may include the Independent Review Mechanism.
- 11 Once you're approved you'll be given further information about training opportunities by a social worker who will support you as a foster carer. Although within the first year you will be expected to undertake the Induction to Foster Care, which is a national programme.
- 12 After discussions on matching their or children's needs to your skills, a child or children is placed with you. Their age and the length of their stay depends on the type of fostering you're approved for.
- 13 Your progress and development as a foster carer will be reviewed each year and when there's significant change in your circumstances.

If we consider that fostering is not the way forward for you, we will always explain our reasons behind the decision. You have a right to appeal against the decisions we make.

How we can support you in fostering

We understand that caring for children can be demanding, and that's why we supply you with a wide range of support.

This helps you provide a high standard of care for the children you look after, and develop new personal skills, enabling you to undertake the tasks we ask of you.

Just as each child placed has their own social worker, every foster carer has a specialist social worker to support them too. Additionally, you will also have access to other professionals to help you look after a child.

Every foster carer receives a Fostering Handbook, which will help guide you in your role as a carer. You will also receive regular newsletters designed to keep you up to date with any changes. In Peterborough we encourage carers to develop their support networks with other carers who are experienced in giving advice and informal support, particularly to those of you newly approved.

There is an emergency duty team that operates outside of office hours. You will be given all these details once you are approved as a carer, as well as access to a 24/7 telephone helpline which is always answered by one of the fostering team.

You and the children you care for will have the opportunity to attend a number of organised social outings each year with other foster carers and the children they foster.

As a valued member of the fostering team you will be consulted on the support you receive and your views sought on new ideas to improve our service and the way we care for you.

The next step to becoming a foster carer...

Please contact us for more details on any of the information in these pages.

Freephone: 0800 0850713

Email: fostering@peterborough.gov.uk

www.peterborough.gov.uk/fostering

For out of office hours there is an answer phone.

Please leave a message and we will contact you as soon as possible.



Frequently asked questions

can I foster if.....

Q. I am 60 or older?

A. Yes. We do not operate an upper age limit, but you would need to be fit and healthy enough to care and meet the needs of a child or young person. The youngest preferred age at which you can usually foster is 21. A medical report regarding suitability to foster is undertaken on every applicant. This is based on a report completed by your own GP and the results considered by the Medical Advisor for Fostering.

Q. I'm not married?

A. Yes. Single people and unmarried couples can foster.

Q. I am unemployed?

A. Yes. We approve people from every walk of life as long as you are financially stable.

Q. I don't own my home?

A. Yes. You need to show that you have a stable home with enough room to care for a child or children, in a safe environment, whether you rent or own your home.

Q. I'm gay or a lesbian?

A. Yes. The city council is firmly committed to equality of opportunity. We are primarily interested in the skills and ability you have to offer and not your sexuality.

Q. I have a disability and/or health problem?

A. Yes. We are firmly committed to equality of opportunity and therefore we are primarily interested in the skills and ability that you have to offer. A medical report regarding suitability to foster is undertaken on every applicant.

Q. I have a criminal conviction?

A. In some circumstances, people who have a criminal record or have been cautioned may be able to foster a child. Much depends on the seriousness of the offence, how long ago since the crime was committed and how you have lived your life since. People with convictions for violent or sexual offences against children cannot foster.

Q. I already have children of my own?

A. Yes. Your own children would be included in the approval process too, as they are important in the family.

Q. I don't live in Peterborough?

A. Yes. We welcome applications from those living outside Peterborough but within reasonable travelling distance. Applicants will need to travel to Peterborough for training and meetings.



At least one adult carer needs to be available throughout the day for fostering.

We hold various informal information evenings throughout the year, where anyone interested in fostering can find out more about the fostering process, the children who are currently waiting for a foster family and those who may need a foster placement in the coming months.

Contact us to find out when our next information evening is and come along.

Congratulations, you have just taken the first step on your journey into fostering.

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