



Information for
prospective
foster carers

PUT YOURSELF IN THE PICTURE

North East Lincolnshire fostering service

North East Lincolnshire Council provides a family-based fostering service for children and young people who become looked after by the local authority; it has received very good reports from government inspectors and provides family placements for over 80% of all children who are looked after by the Council.

Just over a half of all young people looked after by North East Lincolnshire are over the age of 11 years; foster carer enquiries for this age group will always be very welcome; we make them a priority for early attention and assessment.

Over a third of children looked after by North East Lincolnshire Council are aged under 5 years and half of all the new entrants each year are under the age of 5 years. This means that carers for babies and young children, who are often in pairs or larger sibling groups, are always in high demand.

In becoming a foster carer for the local authority, you can be sure of a warm welcome and of knowing that you are helping your own community by making a real difference to the lives of local young people.

About fostering

"Foster carers are just ordinary people doing remarkable things for young people everyday."

North East Lincolnshire
fostering social worker

Fostering today is more like a career - it demands a great deal of effort and commitment; it involves training to improve your skills; it entails caring for children and young people with complex histories who may be hurt, angry or sad.

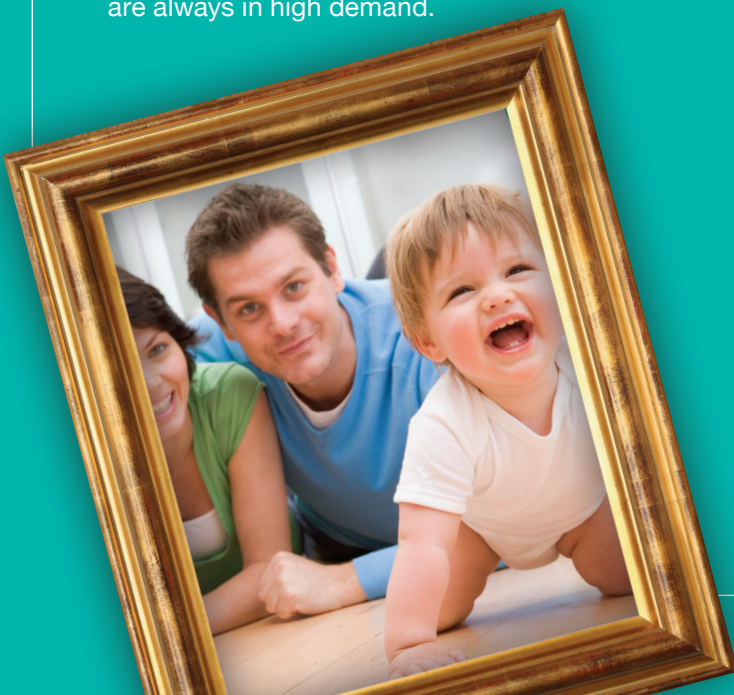
Modern fostering often requires at least one partner to be at home, to be available for the child and to deal with meetings,

appointments, reviews and emergencies. Additional payments are made to reflect these demands where they are higher than usual; the payment rates for Contract Plus and single or specific placement carers reflect the clear expectation that a carer is available throughout the day.

Most of all fostering requires carers to be accountable and considerate in their dealings with even the most challenging child, and we have found that the best way to achieve this is through team work and strong support services.

"The foster carer worked so hard, caring for a neglected little girl who came on in leaps and bounds."

Child's social worker



Foster carers' support

Team support

North East Lincolnshire has a first class team working together with foster carers, helping to give children and young people in need a chance to grow and to shine.

The main players in the team along with foster carers are:

Fostering social workers

Advising, guiding and supervising foster carers' direct work with young people; every carer has a named link worker directly responsible to and for them; all our link workers are qualified social workers with additional post-qualifying awards, including advanced family placement training.

"Our link worker is the most supportive social worker we have ever worked with - she's the best!"

North East Lincolnshire foster carer

Specialist clinical psychologists

Foster carers have swift access to two qualified clinical psychologists, experienced in assessing and supporting young people with emotional needs, who are looked after by the council - they work directly with carers, and are able to offer analysis and response strategies as well as group training. This is of outstanding benefit to carers and young people alike.

"The psychologist's advice was really helpful in understanding how to respond to the child's behaviour."

Child's social worker

Child care social workers

Every child has an assigned qualified children's social worker involved in working directly with the child, the child's family and the foster carers to achieve the best possible outcome for the child. The child's social worker is responsible for developing the child's care plan and for ensuring good decisions are made, not just on behalf of the child, but with the child.

Looked after children's health team

Every looked after child and young person has their health needs assessed and catered for



through the work of the health team. This includes an experienced consultant paediatric doctor and two specialist nurses. They work alongside each other, and they personally know almost all of the council's looked after children and offer a highly personalised service to each child.

Looked after children's education team (LACE)

All 'Looked After' children of school age should have a Personal Education Plan designed to ensure that their education does not suffer because of traumatic experiences and separation from their families. The LACE team offers additional teaching and educational assistance and support to children who are struggling with school attendance or achievement. They work closely with foster carers in planning their approach. The progress of all looked after children is tracked and monitored.

Business support

Administrative staff, a finance officer, fostering assistant, managers, policy makers - everyone with a contribution to make is a valued part of the team, supporting foster carers to do their job.

Fostering changes lives.

You can too!

Additional service support

North East Lincolnshire's Fostering Service believes that the work of foster carers in their own homes is a highly demanding role and deserves the best possible support.

Our extensive range of additional services to assist carers, includes:

- a fully comprehensive training programme.
- a detailed Foster Carers' Handbook of advice and information.
- a regular newsletter of news, information and events.
- social events and award ceremonies.
- membership of 'Fostering Network' - a national foster carers' organisation.
- a Buddy Support Scheme for newly approved carers.
- support group meetings.
- equipment loan for essential items, such as beds, buggies, car seats etc.
- flexibility in support plans to meet specific circumstances, including occasional people carrier car hire.
- up to 14 nights respite from caring per fostering household each year, without loss of carer fees.
- independent counselling and advice should an allegation of harm be made against a foster carer.
- car loan support scheme for carers of two or more children, where a larger vehicle is necessary for all the family including foster children to go out together.



How to become a foster carer

We're sure that having read so far, you will see that becoming a foster carer is a life-changing event. Successful foster carers come from all kinds of backgrounds, but there are several features which are likely to help carers to be successful. In exploring any application to become a foster carer, we will be looking for evidence of:

- an awareness of and ability to promote the rights of every foster child to be nurtured in a loving and caring way, which encompasses the value of responsible parenting;
- a strong commitment to working as part of a team and recognising the differences of foster caring from parenting your own children;
- ideally, some experience of successfully parenting children or working with young people in a voluntary or paid capacity;
- open and accepting attitudes to issues of cultural and religious difference, as well as other matters of difference, such as disability, ethnicity, lesbian and gay relationships, and families who are unable to care for their children effectively;
- a personal sense of security, which allows for the tolerance and understanding of children and young people in public care, some of whom may have suffered much personal trauma and may show their distress through challenging behaviour;
- an ability to take a positive 'long view' for each child to create as many good memories as possible for children to hold

on to for life and to continue believing in each child regardless of setbacks;

- the personal strength and necessary sense of humour to carry out the foster carer role;
- separate bedroom space for each foster child.

Next steps

Information sheet number 4 on our Assessment and Approval Process outlines the steps to achieving approved foster carer status.

This involves a series of training groups, police record checks (CRB), health and personal references and an assessment process through discussions with a fostering social worker.

We will help you to create a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate your competence as a potential carer, addressing the skills and abilities needed by foster carers. These are set out in the standards for the Training, Support and Development of Foster carers. This work will be completed by you during your first year as a carer. The details are in Information Sheet 1. A full written report, which you will see, will be considered by the Fostering Panel before a final decision is made. Once approved as a foster carer, a full induction will be given.



Fostering changes lives. You can too!

Types of placement

Short-Term Task placements

Sometimes called 'mainstream' foster care, short term foster carers will take up to 3 children, sometimes at short notice and work with each child's social worker and birth family in assessing and preparing the child for a planned long term future. Supporting a child in a planned return home or a move to a permanent foster placement or to adoptive parents are common tasks, requiring sensitivity and understanding.

The arrival of children from their own homes into foster care is a traumatic process and carers abilities to help children to deal with their loneliness and distress is a key skill. Where a child's needs are beyond the average, an exceptional task allowance may be payable to the task foster carer. There is usually no additional fee associated with this type of care provision.

Contract placements

The children placed with contract carers will present a range of additional demands, requiring specific skills and team working to provide a more structured form of placement. A fee per child is paid to the carer and more than one child may be placed.

Contract plus placements

This care scheme is designed for children with additional needs who require longer term care and where being the only looked after child in the family is important. It is also used for carers of children with disabilities or larger sibling groups. Payments are usually guaranteed for 52 weeks per year. In all instances there will be a level of need which requires a carer to be at home full time.

Long-Term placements

These are planned placements of a child or young person whose long term needs are known and assessed before matching with a foster carer or foster family. The aim is to provide a permanent substitute family for a child who cannot go back home. Contact with their birth families is a significant need for most children who are placed long term. Such contact often generates mixed feelings and the carers ability to respond to these feelings is an important skill in these placements. Long-term placements can suffer from periods of stress as children struggle to become independent; long term carers are expected to be ready for these and to 'stick with it' even when all relationships seem to be under pressure. Working with the support team is an important part of surviving these periods of stress.

Short Stay placements

Many dedicated foster carers need to have short breaks from being full time carers for their foster children. Short stay care with a known carer can be a valuable support to enable carers to maintain their commitment to their fostering role. This may be day care or overnight. All the same checks, preparation and assessment have to be carried out for any one wishing to be a short stay carer only.

Specific Placements

There are a limited number of Foster Carers on this scheme, who take a child with highly complex and challenging needs. The local authority usually will have had the care of the child for sometime so that the level of need has been fully assessed. Intensive work, often involving other multi agency professionals, will be expected from the carers, usually on a long term basis. The level of skill as well as stamina and resilience of the carers has to be very high. This role is most often taken by experienced foster carers with specialist skills and knowledge who enter into a specific agreement with the local authority.

Put yourself in the picture

Promoting children's development

- All foster carers are expected to continue their learning throughout their fostering careers by attending training events each year and taking up lessons and ideas from the social workers and psychologists and from the support team. This helps carers develop their skills with children and avoids feelings of isolation.
- North East Lincolnshire Council has a Children and Young People's Plan for the whole community and its specific aims are related to improving the outcomes for children in all areas of their development.
- The major outcome areas are :-
Staying Safe, Being Healthy, Enjoying and Achieving, Achieving Economic Well-Being and Making A Positive Contribution.
- Foster Carers are very influential people in encouraging looked after children to aim higher, offering social and educational opportunities to them and going the extra mile to help children build confidence and self esteem.
- Information Sheet 7 sets out the Council's Pledge to support and encourage all looked after young people and children. Foster carers are central to this pledge as they can make all the difference to children's achievements.

Come on board

Below are some further comments from people who are already involved in the fostering service of North East Lincolnshire Council. We hope you may feel you have the potential to join them and to become one of our valued foster carers making a difference to children's lives.

To take another step towards a whole new life, please complete the Family Detail Form and return it to us in the envelope provided.

**Thank you very much
for your interest.**

"The LACE Team facilities are very good. Children are able to receive excellent additional support."

"Children enjoy living in warm friendly and caring homes with families who look after and support them."

"I love keeping families together."

"We are looking for more foster carers who enjoy challenging teenagers!"



Fostering Changes Lives

Fostering and Adoption Service

Tel: **(01472) 326292 option 2**

Email: fosteringandadoption@nelincs.gov.uk

www.nelincs.gov.uk/fostering

Open: **Monday - Thursday 9:00am - 5.00pm,**
Friday 9:00am - 4:30pm

If English is not your first language, you can call the Fostering and Adoption Service and say in English, or ask a friend to say, that you would like information in another language.

If you would like the information in another format, please contact us.

To find out more contact the fostering team

t: (01472) 326292 option 2 | www.nelincs.gov.uk/fostering