

Fostering and Adoption

IN DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

www.dumgal.gov.uk/fostering

tel 01387 260068

“Very rewarding, you get your ups and downs but at the end of the day knowing you've done your best.”



Welcome

Dumfries and Galloway Council would like to thank you for taking the initial step to see what fostering is all about?

Within Dumfries and Galloway, we try wherever possible to support children to live at home but for all sorts of reasons sometimes this is just not possible. When this happens, we provide care for children from birth up to the age of 18 years of age in all different types of fostering households . It is really important that children know where they are from and we encourage all our carers to help us work in partnership with parents to see if it is possible for children to return home to live. If this is not possible, we ask foster carers to provide a home for a few days, a few weeks or months or even longer to allow us to ensure they have a safe, nurturing family for the remainder of their childhood . We believe that every child deserves the right to live in a family, would you be able to share your family life with a child who needs one? Many of our foster carers tell us fostering can have its ups and downs but it can be fun, rewarding and it is great to make a positive difference in a child's life.

Children are all different and for this reason we need people coming forward to be foster carers with different skills and abilities to play, share, teach and nurture a child or young person for as long as need be. You may be a parent, or you may not? You may be in a relationship, or you may not? You may own your own house, or you may not? There is no one type of person who makes a good foster carer there are lots and if you would like to be one of them and have a desire to help a child and would wish to consider fostering we hope this booklet will help you decide.

If you would like to make a positive difference in a child's life become a foster carer for the children of Dumfries and Galloway.

We would love to hear from you.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to pick up the phone and call us on 01387 260068 or you can email us at Familyplacementteam@dumgal.gov.uk

Contents



Who can care 4

What you'll do and the help you'll receive 5

Fostering 7

Permanent fostering and adoption 9

Specialist foster care intensive support service 11

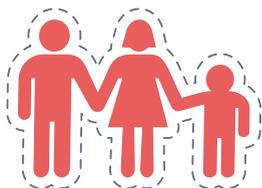
Respite foster care 13

Foster care for children with disabilities 15

Frequently asked questions 16

We welcome your feedback 18





Who can care

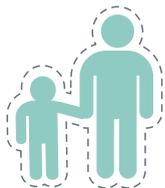
Carers come from all kinds of ethnic, religious, cultural and language backgrounds and as long as you're over 21:

- you can be single, living with a partner, same sex couple or married/civil partnership
- 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

Carers for children come from lots of different backgrounds with lots of different skills and qualities.

You must:

- have understanding and enthusiasm for looking after a child or young person
- be able to understand and empathise with a child or young person who has experienced neglect or abuse and with a parent who has been unable to look after or failed to protect their child
- work as part of a team that can include the child or young persons family, social workers, educators and other professional staff
- not become overwhelmed by a child or young person whose behaviour may sometimes be difficult and challenging
- be flexible and non-judgmental
- be able to negotiate and compromise
- have an understanding of trauma and the impact this may have on a child or young person
- you must be able to provide an individual bedroom for children 2 years and over or siblings 8 years and over
- have a sense of humour



What you'll do and the help you will receive

All carers need to be committed to providing high quality care and support to vulnerable children. You'll be helping ensure the child is cared for in a safe, stimulating environment so they can grow and thrive as individuals and as part of a family.

Here are just some of the tasks and responsibilities involved in working with children.

- ensure and promote the safety and wellbeing of the child
- work in partnership with social workers and other professionals
- help children and young people make the most of their education
- promote the physical and mental health of children and young people
- keep information confidential
- provide comfort and reassurance
- acknowledge and respect the child's identity
- encourage family contact and visits
- Promote positive opportunities for children and young people in your care

In return, you'll receive:

- individual support and advice from experienced family placement workers
- comprehensive preparation and training
- allowances and any appropriate expenses
- the chance to meet and share your experiences with other carers.
- ongoing training opportunities
- you will receive the opportunity to attend monthly support groups



“ Routine, structure, love and attention is what the children need from me when they are with me. If you give that attachment its easily transferable ”



Fostering

Fostering means providing temporary care for children who cannot live with their own families, sometimes for weeks, months or for the rest of their childhood.

The children

Children who need to be fostered are aged 0 to 18 and come into care for a wide variety of reasons. Sometimes the problems at home can be sorted quickly. For others, it can take a few months or even years for parents to get back on their feet.

Occasionally, the difficulties are so serious that a decision is reached that a child cannot return home. If this happens the child may sometimes remain with their foster carers (although this should not be assumed) or move to permanent foster carers or adopters.

What the children need

Some children may come to foster carers at very short notice, but where possible we try to ensure this is done in a planned way. Most will need reassurance and support because they have had to leave their own family and get used to unfamiliar people and a strange home. They usually need a lot of time, understanding and good physical care. For most, keeping in regular contact with their parents, brothers and sisters is important.

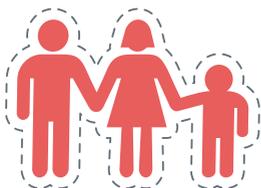
About you

In addition to the general qualities and experience needed for carers, as a foster carer you must:

- have the ability to prepare the child for moving back to live with their family, or to move on to permanent foster carers or adopters
- You have the ability to prepare a young person for moving on to living independently in supporting lodgings or in their own accommodation



“One of my children still come to see me with their new mummy and they call me Nana. A lot of them keep in touch with me and I still get to do activities with them”



Permanent fostering and adoption

Permanent fostering means providing full-time care for children who cannot live with their own families for the rest of their childhood. Adoption means providing a child with a family for life, secured by an adoption order through the courts.

The children

Children who need permanent fostering or adoption will have been looked after by the Children and Families Social Work Services and can't go back to their own homes for a range of reasons. They are likely to have experienced trauma in their early years and they may have been neglected or abused. They may feel rejected, angry and be lacking confidence or self-esteem. These feelings can make their behaviour quite difficult.

Most of the children are of primary school age or younger and some will need extra support with their education. There are single children and groups of brothers and sisters. Where possible we will always try and keep siblings together.

We have noticed recently there is an increasing number of young people 12 and over who require to be looked after.

What the children need

The children need stability and security for the rest of their childhood. They need a family who they can turn to in their adult lives. They also need a family who appreciate that their birth parents may still be important to them and that some contact, direct or indirect, may be needed.

About you

In addition to the general qualities and experience needed for carers, as a permanent foster carer or adopter you must:

- be able to make a commitment to a child for the rest of their childhood and beyond



“ It’s nice to see the ones who have moved on and are doing well ”



Specialist foster care

Our intensive support service involves looking after children with a higher level of need on a full or part-time basis.

The children

Children who need specialist foster care are usually aged eight years or older. They have experienced varied degrees of neglect, abuse and disruption. Some of the children may have lived in residential care. They can present a higher level of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, but, with the right family, the children can grow, develop and thrive. For older children this can mean a better start in adult life.

What the children need

These children need carers who can manage challenging behaviour and who can provide a safe home environment with security, clear boundaries, advice and guidance.

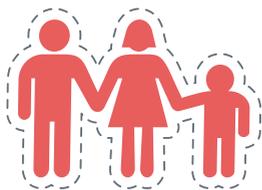
About you

In addition to the general qualities and experience needed for carers, as a specialist foster carer you must have:

- previous experience of being a foster carer, working in a residential unit or other relevant experience
- the emotional strength, resilience and enthusiasm to help young people
- an adult at home or available at all times to support the child
- a spare bedroom for the young person in your home
- a commitment to continue with your professional development
- energy, patience, commitment



“When my wee one came to me 18 months ago; she was 3 and half and functioning at age 2 years 2 months. Now she has been re-tested and is functioning at age 4, its good to see her catching up with her peers. I am pleased she is meeting her milestones due to routines I have put in place”



Respite foster care

Respite foster care involves looking after a child or children for planned overnight stays in the care of your own home.

The children

The children are aged 0-18 years. Respite care supports parents or grandparents or foster carers to continue to care for children by giving them some time and space for themselves.

What the children need

The children need carer families who can care for them for short periods of time. This can allow them to have a break from their current care setting.

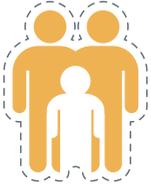
About you

In addition to the general qualities and experience needed for carers, you need to be available for several periods of planned respite each month and consider some school holiday support.

“I love my job, I love the young people I look after, we have such a laugh and I still want to be doing this when I’m 80. It keeps me young!”



“Watching them grow and giving them good life experiences i.e. holidays, clubs etc are what makes it worth it”



Foster care for children with disabilities

Foster care for children with disabilities involves caring for a child with additional needs.

The children

The children are usually aged from birth to sixteen years and are affected by a wide range of disabilities. Some have difficulty with communication and can show some challenging behaviour. Others may have a physical or learning disability, hearing or visual impairments. Most children live with their families.

What the children need

Caring for a child with disabilities can put extra pressure on families. Regular planned breaks provided by trusted carers can make all the difference, allowing everyone to 'recharge their batteries'. The children need activities that help them build up their self esteem and give them fun and stimulation. Some children will depend on carers for their physical care. They all need a high level of supervision and care which enables them to reach their full potential.

Some children have very complex medical needs or behavioural difficulties and their families require substantial support. Other children are unable to live at home and need full time care. A few of the children may have experienced abuse or neglect. These children need carers who can understand their individual needs and offer them commitment, consistency and patience.

They need a carer who can meet the special challenges that caring for a child with disabilities brings.

About you

In addition to the general qualities and experience needed for carers, you must have an understanding of disability. Carers are given regular support and training in relation to the specific needs of children placed with them.

We particularly welcome carers who live in bungalows or other accommodation suitable for wheelchair access.



Frequently asked questions

I'm on my own – can I still be a carer?

Yes. We'll consider you as a carer, whether you're single, married, divorced or living with a partner.

Must I already be a parent?

No. We welcome applications from single people and couples who don't have children, as well as those who do.

Do I need a big house?

No. It doesn't matter if you live in a flat or a house, or if you rent or own your home. However, it's important that children are able to have privacy so you will need enough space.

I'm in my 50s – is that too old to be a carer?

No. People of all ages make successful carers.

Do we need to be well off?

No. Your ability to be a carer does not depend on the amount of money you may have.

Will I get paid?

Yes, carers get paid as self-employed people by the Council. The amount you're paid depends on the type of caring you undertake.

You would also be entitled to tax relief from the Government. You would receive a maintenance allowance/expenses to cover the costs of caring for the child. Some adopters are eligible for an adoption allowance.

“It’s good to be able to get peer support from other carers”

My time is limited – can I still be a carer?

Yes. You don’t have to be available on a full-time basis for respite.

What ages are children who need care?

All ages. We need carers who can look after children from babies through to adolescents. We also need carers for sibling groups.

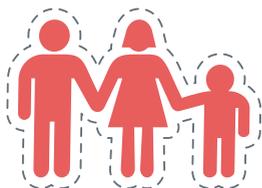
How do you get selected?

Looking after children is the most important role anyone can do so we take the task of choosing carers very seriously. There’s a series of home visits where you find out more about what’s involved and we find out more about you and your home.

Our fostering assessment is about finding enthusiastic, caring people to look after children throughout Dumfries and Galloway

How long does it take to become a carer?

It can usually take between three and six months to become a registered foster carer. Listed below are the steps involved. Once you decide to become a carer with us, you will be assigned a family placement worker who will guide and support you through your fostering journey.



We welcome your feedback

If you decide to apply to become a carer or adopter, you will be starting an important and hopefully long-lasting relationship with Dumfries and Galloway Council.

We will ask for your feedback at the time when the decision is made about your approval as a carer or adopter and then at regular reviews. You can, of course, let us know your views at other times of the year, you will be invited to an annual carers consultation day to share your views. Approved carers and adopters are all members of the national organisation, Fostering Network. This organisation is also interested in your views.

The complaints procedure

The Council has a complaints procedure that approved carers and adopters can use if they are unhappy about some aspect of the service they have received or on behalf of a child or children for whom they are caring.

Further details of the complaints procedure can be supplied on request.



“ Hard work but rewarding. Social Work were there when I needed support and it made a massive difference to the placement

”

Fostering and Adoption

IN DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY



Contact Us

www.dumgal.gov.uk/fostering

tel 01387 260068