

FOSTER WITH CLACKMANNANSHIRE

INFORMATION PACK



**#Keep
The
Promise**



Clackmannanshire
Council

www.clacks.gov.uk

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WELCOME

We welcome your interest in fostering with Clackmannanshire Council.

Our aspiration in Clackmannanshire is that each and every child grows up loved, safe, respected and able to realise their full potential. Our children and young people have told us how important it is for them to grow up within their own communities, close to family, friends, schools and clubs.

When children are unable to live within their families, local foster carers have a vital role to help achieve this for our children. Providing children with stable homes, continuity and enduring, loving relationships is the foundation that foster carers can provide to support a child to thrive.

Fostering with Clackmannanshire Council offers an exciting opportunity to be part of an authority that is committed to improving life experiences of our children and young people, thereby strengthening our community.

This booklet has been created to provide you with an overview of the fostering role and frequently asked questions. The Family Connections team are here to support you on your journey and to answer any further questions you may have.

Best wishes,
Family Connections Team

THE FAMILY CONNECTIONS TEAM

The Family Connections Team is comprised of experienced Social Work staff, whose role it is to work closely with care givers to provide support and guidance.

OUR COMMITMENT TO CARING FAMILIES

- We will prioritise the best interest of the child/young person in all decisions and actions
- We will maintain a secure and stable environment for children
- We will provide high quality care through trained and compassionate caregivers
- We will offer supervision, training and support to our foster families
- We will embrace diversity and respect all backgrounds, cultures and identities
- We will promote the culture of being a caring and supportive community and value the importance of connections in children's lives i.e. in particular the connection between brothers and sisters
- We are committed to the Promise Plan and improving the lived experience of all our children, young people and families who we may come into contact with.

THE ROLE OF A FOSTER CARER

Foster carers provide a child or young person with a secure, stable and nurturing home environment in which their physical and emotional needs will be met.

Your role as a foster carer in the early stages with children in your care will be to build up a trusting relationship. You will need time and availability to connect with the child, build up routines and give them unconditional love.

Foster carers work alongside health, Children's Hearings, education, charities and social services. This may be in day to day appointments, meetings or reviews of the child's plan. Partnership working with the child's family is also important. Foster carers need to support the child to maintain family links. The child's plan may include family time throughout the week, which would be planned alongside the child's social worker. It is essential that all foster carers are flexible and can make themselves available to attend these meetings, and are able to act as an advocate for a child's needs and wishes where the child is unable to do so.

Foster carers play a core role within the care team, the child needs adults who are physically and emotionally available for them. In order to do this, we generally ask that one carer gives up work so that they can meet the demands which come with fostering.

Some of our carers have fostered for up to 40 years. This is testament to the rewards and satisfaction of the role.

APPLICANT CRITERIA



Applicants must be over 21 years old



Applicants must have a spare room



Applicants must have a legal right to work in the United Kingdom



Single applicants as well as couples are welcomed



Couples must have lived together for a minimum of two years



Applicants should be able to provide a smoke free environment within the home



Applicants must be willing to undergo relevant references, PVG and health checks



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OUR STORY

FAMILY CONNECTIONS CARER

We applied to foster as we felt we had time and space as well as lots of patience, understanding and love to give.

We began as short break carers initially. We were excited and nervous to get started. We quickly overcame any anxieties we had while caring for our first child. We knew we had made the right choice, and later made the decision to become interim carers.

We have been fostering for over 15 years, and in that time have cared for just over 40 children and young people. We have come so far in our journey and gained so much experience through day-to-day care and the ongoing training provided by the Family Connections Team.

Over the years we have supported children and young people as well as their parents and siblings. Some of us just need the time, empathy, trust and support to become the positive role-models that children want and need.

Throughout our journey we have had many highs and some lows but every minute and day has been so worthwhile. Every child that has come into our lives has experienced change even in a small way. We have dealt with all sort of issues but gradually the barriers are broken down and the child begins to trust, thrive and flourish which helps him or her achieve in all areas of life.




My foster carers listen when I talk.



My foster carer cooks good meals. I like her spaghetti bolognese!



My foster carers make me feel safe.



My foster carer comforts me when I'm sad or upset.



My foster carers made me feel welcome and now I think of them as mum and dad.

My foster carers listen when I talk.

My foster carer takes me to see my brothers which is good.

TYPES OF FOSTERING

There are lots of different reasons why children and young people may need a fostering family. It may be for a few days, weeks, months or years. Regardless, your home will be their home throughout their stay with you. In your assessment, consideration of what type of fostering you are available to provide will be explored.

Emergency

Emergency carers look after children where there has been a crisis or unplanned event, and there is an immediate concern for safety. This type of placement can last no longer than 12 weeks.

Interim and Long Term

Interim foster care is the term used when child is in your care for up to 2 years. During this time there may be further social work support and assessment needed, to decide if the child can return to their birth family, or make a plan for their longer term care.

Long Term Fostering is the term used where children remain with foster carers for longer than 2 years. In this scenario there may be a plan for the child to remain with their fostering family however, no permanent legal order will be in place.

Permanent

Permanent carers look after children where a decision has already been made that they will not be returning to the care of their families.

This is a lifelong commitment to a child and this type of match between a child and a foster carer is approved at a panel.

TYPES OF FOSTERING

Short Break

Short break carers offer children, birth families and foster families a break during times of crisis or during planned breaks.

Foster carers are encouraged to include children in family holidays, however sometimes this is not possible due to issues around passports or parental consent. In these circumstances a short break carer may look after the child for a short period.

A short break may also be provided as a support to the carer as part of an agreed plan.

Supported Carers

Supported carers are able to offer the continuation of a loving home to young people up to the age of 21. This young person will have been looked after in foster care by the same carers. This is known as Continuing Care.

Supported Lodgings

Supported lodgings carers are not foster carers. However, the role has some similarities. A supported lodgings carer will offer a young person 16 to 25 a place to stay as well as guidance, mentoring and moral support.

This may include help to build independence skills, encouragement to attend education or employment, and ease the transition towards living independently in the future.

Young people will generally be care experienced and some may have fled conflict from overseas.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Making an Enquiry

To make an enquiry about Fostering with Clackmannanshire Council, you can:

- Telephone us on 01259 225085
- Complete the online form at our website: clacks.gov.uk/children/fostering/
- Email us at fosteradopt@clacks.gov.uk

Our team will arrange a time to contact you.

Home Visit

One of our experienced Supervising Social Workers can visit you at home to find out more about you, your family and what you could offer a child or young person. They will want to know if your home is suitable, for example if you have enough space and a spare room. They will consider whether you have the skills and qualities necessary for fostering. It's also an opportunity to provide you with more information and for you to ask some more in-depth questions about fostering. Should you decide to proceed you will be invited to fill out a formal application form.

Skills to Foster: Preparation Course

You will be invited to attend our preparatory course 'Skills to Foster' together with other applicants. The course is a mandatory part of your assessment and preparation to foster. The course has seven modules that will be conducted over evenings and/or weekend sessions.

Skills to Foster will provide you with knowledge about the fostering role, introduction to trauma informed practice, and some practical skills and abilities you will need to start your new role in fostering.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

If you have decided to proceed with your application to foster, a supervising social worker will complete an assessment report. When this is complete and there is a recommendation for you to be approved as a foster carer, a date will be given for you to attend the Clackmannanshire Fostering and Adoption Panel.

The Assessment

The purpose of the assessment is to identify whether you have the skills, experience and values to provide foster care for our children and young people. This is the most in-depth component of the process and it will take around four months to complete. The assessment is very detailed and will consider your whole life experience, your resilience and strengths to care for children who have experienced trauma, and the ability to provide consistent, loving relationships.

The assessing social worker will visit you and your family a number of times to talk in detail about the qualities you may have or will need as a fostering family. Throughout the assessment there will be additional pieces of homework or additional reading. The assessing social worker will also talk to your wider family, close friends and any other people who are important to your support network to give a greater understanding about who you are, and how you would suit the fostering role.

Throughout the assessment, you will have the opportunity to find out more about the fostering role, and to think about whether this matches your expectations, or if it is the right time for your family.

The assessing social worker will work with you to consider how many children you could foster, and what ages. And when complete, the assessing social worker brings all this information together into a report, along with a recommendation on your potential as a foster carer. You will have the opportunity to read the report and add your own comments.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Attending the Fostering Panel

The last stage in the approval process is when the assessing social worker presents their assessment to the Fostering Panel, along with any other relevant information that may assist the Panel in making a decision. You will be invited to attend. The Panel is chaired by an independent person with a background in childcare and fostering. It is their job to consider all the information, to talk to you and your assessing social worker, then to decide whether to recommend you for approval to Clackmannanshire Council's Head of Service who then makes the final decision.

Agency Decision Maker

The Head of Service will make the decision as to whether or not to accept the Fostering and Adoption Panel's recommendations. The Head of Service will write to you within 14 days to advise you of their decision.

Post Approval Training and Caring

Once you are an approved foster carer, you will be encouraged to attend carer support groups and complete key training that will help you with the role. During this time you will be considered to be matched with any children needing care, and supported by your Supervising Social Worker to prepare for your first experience of caring.

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OUR STORY

FAMILY CONNECTIONS SHORT BREAK CARER

Having worked full time for 28 years, I felt that I was no longer enjoying my work the way I used to and needed something different in my life. I felt I could make a difference in a child or young person's life. I felt that short break caring would best suit me as it still offered me the flexibility to continue my career on a part time basis, and also allowed me to dip my toe in the water to see if foster caring was for me. I'm so glad I did!

Over the last year and a half, I have looked after 15 children and young people ranging in ages from 6 months to teenage boys and girls. I find foster caring to be such a rewarding job; I thoroughly enjoy the company of young people and receiving positive feedback from them in the form of a cuddle or asking to come and stay again gives me an overwhelming sense of achievement. Fostering has enriched my life and makes me feel good knowing I have helped in a positive way. It is the most rewarding thing I have ever done.

The ongoing support and development opportunities have increased my knowledge and awareness of child development, attachment, challenging behaviours, trauma and I am thriving on being able to put my learning into practice. I am also allocated a dedicated supervising social worker who is on hand to provide me with the support and assistance I require, no matter how small or how big. I also have access to this support and assistance out-with office hours from the Emergency Duty Team so I never feel that I am alone.



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why should I foster with Clackmannanshire Council?

Clackmannanshire Council foster carers are the first to be considered when a child needs a foster home, and as a result you are likely to have placements most of the time. Caring for a local child ensures that they are able to grow up in their own communities, maintain friendships, family contact, and sibling relationships.

The benefit of fostering for the council is access to coordinated support from a local team in respect of a child's wellbeing, support needs and education. The child you care for will have an allocated Social Worker employed by the council who will work closely with your supervising social worker, and as a foster carer you will be able to access support from a range of Council Services.

Do I need specific qualifications to foster?

No. We acknowledge all applicants bring different skills and life experiences and welcome that diversity of different backgrounds. We would expect applicants to have some experience of children and young people whether that is as parents, members of the extended family, work experience or volunteering.

You will receive training to help you and your family build upon the skills you already have and develop new skills needed to foster. You will be provided with relevant training, support groups, and support from your Social Worker. All applicants will require to undertake Skills to Foster training as part of the assessment process as well as undertaking regular training following approval as a foster carer.

Do foster carers get paid?

Clackmannanshire Council provide a competitive financial package for foster carers. This includes:

- a weekly fostering allowance which is intended to cover the costs of looking after a child
- additional fostering allowance is paid at key times of the year including birthdays, Christmas and summer holidays
- a weekly fee as a recognition of carers time, skills and experience
- a retainer when no children are in placement
- 4 weeks short break allowance per year or equivalent payment

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What support do foster carers receive?

Our experienced team is based here in Clackmannanshire. All foster carers will be allocated their own Supervising Social Worker who will guide them through their fostering journey and offer support and formal supervision through regular visits.

Carers will also have access to carer support groups, care community events, regular training and reviews.

New foster carers will also be linked in with experienced foster carers who will link in to the fostering community.

Can I foster if I have a physical or mental health condition?

Your health will be considered when applying to foster and any health conditions are taken into account as part of the assessment process. This is something you should discuss with your assessing Social Worker, any health issues will be explored through medical checks.

The most important factor is whether you are physically and psychologically fit enough to cope with the demands of caring for a child - this may influence the age or number of children that you are approved to care for.

I smoke, can I be a foster carer?

Clackmannanshire Council encourages all applicants to seek support to stop smoking. All foster carers must be able to provide a smoke-free environment for children. Smoking is not a barrier to fostering, provided you do not smoke within the home. It is Clackmannanshire Council's policy not to place children under 5 with foster carers who smoke.

How will fostering affect my children?

Fostering involves the whole family. It is important that everyone is on board to ensure that a child feels included within a household. The children of foster carers play a key role in the fostering household and should be included throughout the assessment process and their needs considered during the approval and matching process.

Your children will need support to understand the fostering role and to adjust to changes within their home. They may also need time and support to build up empathy towards the children who arrive at their home.

Many children say that they have enjoyed being part of a fostering household and gained a lot from it. Many of our existing carers have children and will be able to share their experiences.



OUR CONTACT



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clacks.gov.uk/children/fostering/



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