



Choosing a Fostering Service

Thank you for considering that fostering might be for you. This information sheet is intended as a guide to some of the questions you might want to ask a fostering service. Do not be afraid to ask as many questions as you would like before making an application to become a foster carer.

The Fostering Network believes that all foster carers should receive adequate allowances, fees, training and support. However, the level and standard of these elements varies enormously between fostering services in the UK.

If you are considering becoming a foster carer, it is important that you speak to a number of fostering services to find one that provides the right support package for you.

You can apply to foster for a local authority or an independent fostering provider. If you decide to foster for a local authority you are not restricted to the local authority in which you live. Contact details of fostering services can be found at www.fostering.net/providers

What allowances do I get?

All foster carers receive an allowance which should cover the full costs of looking after a fostered child, increasing with the age of the child. The Fostering Network recommends minimum allowances which are widely recognised as the benchmark for costs incurred as a result of fostering. These recommended allowances start at £114.87 per week for children under four, and go up to £198.11 for ages 16 and above.

In reality, however, allowances vary from £50 to over £200 a week for the youngest children. It is important that you are sure that the allowance on offer from a fostering service will be sufficient to cover your costs.

Do I get a fee payment?

Around half of all foster carers receive some sort of fee payment to recognise their time and skills. The amount varies enormously so you need to be satisfied with the level of payment the fostering service provides. Some fostering services like their foster carers to be home based and not have any other forms of employment; you should check this with different services.

Do I get paid 52 weeks of the year?

You may not necessarily have a child placed with you 52 weeks of the year. Some fostering services do offer payments all year round even when you have a vacancy. If you are relying on your fostering income to pay the bills, this may be something you wish to enquire about.

Do I get any holiday/respite/break in between children?

Fostering is a very demanding job and many foster carers find it is essential to have time to rest and recuperate. Some fostering services will offer two weeks holiday, weekend respite and a choice to have a break between each child. You may want to explore these options.

What kind of training is provided?

While everyone will have some kind of pre-approval training, the training offered after you have been approved as a foster carer differs in each fostering service. Enquire about training opportunities when considering different services.

What support is available?

Fostering can sometimes be an isolated task so the support provided by your fostering service is vital. Support comes in many different forms including out of hours support, helplines, your social worker and the local foster carers' support group (known as a foster care association). Many services also offer free membership of the Fostering Network. Explore the support mechanisms offered by each fostering service.

General tips

Speak to a number of different fostering services and find out about the different support packages they provide.

Fostering services tend to hold information sessions. Use this opportunity to speak to staff and foster carers, and to find out more about how the service operates.

Ask to speak to a foster carer – they above anyone else will give you an honest view of the fostering service!

Useful contacts

The Fostering Network's information line

☎ 020 7261 1884

✉ info@fostering.net

Further information on all these issues can be found on our website

www.fostering.net