



**Foster
Birmingham**
Birmingham's biggest family

Join Birmingham's Biggest Family!



www.fosterbirmingham.co.uk



Welcome

We are Foster Birmingham, part of Birmingham Children's Trust, and Birmingham's Biggest Family!

We are thrilled you are considering fostering as foster carers really do have a profound and life-changing effect on the children and young people in their care.

Birmingham Children's Trust was set up in 2018 to run Children's Services for Birmingham City Council. The Trust is owned by, but is independent from, the Council. This means that we are free to act in the best interests of the children that need our services. We do not make any profit from fostering, so every penny of our funding goes towards improving the outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in the city.

If you have any questions, our friendly team would love to hear from you so please, get in touch!

🖱 www.fosterbirmingham.co.uk

☎ 0121 303 7575



What is fostering?



Fostering is a way of providing a stable family life for children and young people who are unable to live with their birth family. This allows children and young people to thrive in a loving and secure home with their foster carers and can be for a short or longer period of time.

Whilst fostering is extremely rewarding, the children and young people who live with foster carers come from a diverse range of backgrounds and may display some challenging behaviours depending on their past experiences.

Fostering is different to adoption as an adoption order ends a child's legal relationship with their birth family. As a foster carer you are not the legal guardian of the child or young person as this remains with the birth parents and / or the local authority.

You will need to be available to take children and young people in your care to regular health appointments, as well

as to attend meetings about their care and educational needs. Fostering also involves working closely with a range of people including social workers, teachers, health professionals and birth families.

Once foster carers are approved, they are supervised and supported by an allocated Supervising Social Worker which involves regular phone contact, home visits, attendance at meetings, and training events.

Children and young people in foster care have their own Social Workers who will visit them regularly in their foster home to talk to them about how they are being cared for, any problems they may be having, and future plans.

Children and young people who need foster care range from new-born up to the age of 18 years. Around half the children in care in Birmingham are part of a sibling group, and we always try to keep them together when possible.

Types of fostering

Children and young people who are fostered are not able to live with their birth family, which can be for any number of reasons. Therefore, foster carers may be required to care for a child or young person for a short period of time, perhaps due to a crisis in the child's or young person's birth family, or for longer periods of time where it has been decided that a child or young person can't be safely cared for within their birth family.

During your assessment your Social Worker will discuss with you what types of children you are open to fostering and will make a recommendation about what type of foster care to approve you for.

Mainstream fostering

There are two types of mainstream fostering these are short-term and long-term fostering.

Short-term fostering

Most children come into care short-term whilst Social Workers complete assessments in order to make plans for a child to either return to their birth family or to find a permanent placement through adoption or long-term fostering. As a short-term foster carer you will offer a home to lots of different children over time.

Long-term fostering

Most children who are fostered return to their birth family, but for some this is not possible and therefore these children require a long-term foster home. Many children who need long-term homes are aged 8 years and above and often need a foster home that they can share with their brothers and sisters. Caring for a child long-term means you support them into young adulthood. This often includes supporting their contact with their birth

family over the years. Sometimes our young people stay with their foster carers after their 18th birthday, this is known as 'Staying Put'.

Specialist fostering

We also require foster carers for some specialist fostering including Step Up Fostering, Emergency Fostering, and Parent and Child Fostering to name but a few. There are separate information leaflets for the different types of specialist fostering we are looking to recruit for currently.

Get intouch

Visit www.fosterbirmingham.co.uk or call our friendly team on **0121 303 7575** to download / request this information.



Can I foster?



We consider each application on an individual basis, so you can be a foster carer regardless of whether you are:

- Single, married or unmarried
- Heterosexual or LGBTQ+
- Disabled or able-bodied
- Employed or receiving benefits
- Have your own children, or not
- Are a home owner or renting
- From any ethnic or religious background
- And there is no upper age limit to foster



What else do I need to know?

- You must be aged 21 year or over
- You must have the right to live in the UK
- You must have a spare bedroom for a foster child or young person to use
- If you have any criminal cautions or convictions for offences against children, or sexual offences against adults, then you will not be able to foster.
- It is important to remember that fostering will have an impact upon your own children. From experience we know how crucial they can be to creating successful placements. For this reason, they will be part of the application and assessment process and we will always seek to answer any questions or concerns they may have.
- If you smoke (including e-cigarettes) you cannot foster a child under the age of 5 years
- You need to be patient, caring, empathetic, non-judgemental, and open-minded
- You need to value diversity and be prepared to look after children from any background
- You should be adaptable, resilient, and resourceful
- A good sense of humour is also definitely required!



The journey to becoming a foster carer

Some people still think it takes many months or even years to become a foster carer. At Birmingham Children's Trust we have streamlined the process so that it

now only takes 16 weeks from the day you apply. You will still enjoy excellent training and an in-depth assessment, but without any unnecessary delays.



Step 1. Enquire

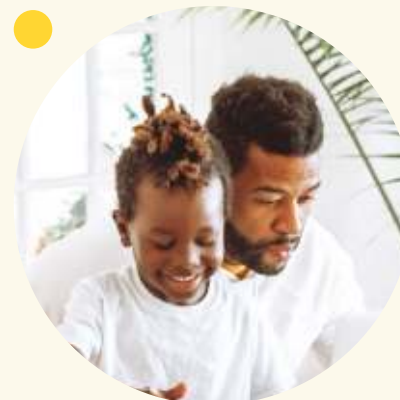
Let us know you're interested in fostering by calling our friendly team on **0121 303 7575** or filling out our enquiry form at **www.fosterbirmingham.co.uk** and we'll be in touch.

Step 2. Home Visit

A worker will visit you at home to explain more about fostering and the process to become a foster carer in more detail.

Step 3. Return Formal Application Form

If the Home Visit goes well, we will send you the formal application form (called a Registration of Interest Form) to fill out and return to us. Once we have received this back, this starts Stage One of the process.



Step 4. Stage One

This stage involves us carrying out various statutory checks and references including a medical and criminal background check. The medical is simply to ensure you are fit and well enough to cope with the rigours of fostering.

The criminal background check will tell us if you have any criminal cautions or convictions which would prevent you from fostering. Having previous convictions doesn't necessarily exclude you, but it is important that you share anything that may come up so there are no surprises, and we can work through any potential issues with you.

If you have any offences against children, or sexual offences against adults, then we will not be able to progress your application to foster.

During this stage you will also need to attend the 'Skills to Foster' preparation training which aims to give you the skills and knowledge needed to help you care for children who may have experienced neglect and abuse.

Your Assessing Social Worker will consider all the information gained during this stage in detail before making a decision about whether you can progress to Stage Two.



Step 5. Stage Two

During this stage you'll be visited regularly by your Assessing Social Worker who will assess your ability to foster and prepare your assessment report with you.

This stage involves lots of conversations with you, your partner, any ex-partners, any children you may have, and wider friends and family to get a rounded picture of you and your family. Where we can, we run Stage 1 and Stage 2 concurrently and work towards a 16-week timescale.

Step 6. Panel

The report is then presented to the Fostering Panel which you will be invited to attend. The Panel is made up of different people who have been involved in fostering; professionals, a medical advisor, social workers, adults who were fostered as children, and foster carers etc. They will review the report in detail and make a recommendation about your suitability to foster.

Step 7. Approval by ADM


The final decision about your approval, however, is made by the Agency Decision Maker. You will be advised in writing within 7 working days of the Panel making its recommendation.

Step 8. Placement of children

Once you are approved you will be allocated your own Supervising Social Worker who will visit and prepare you for your first placement. When you are ready for a placement you will be considered for any suitable matches of children who need a foster placement.



Choosing a fostering agency



We understand that it can be confusing deciding which agency to foster with, but it is worth considering that Birmingham Children's Trust are responsible for all of the children who come into care in Birmingham.

This means that when a child needs a foster family in Birmingham, we will always look to our own in-house foster carers first and will only look further afield when we have explored every possible option of meeting the child's needs from our in-house carers first.

This means that our foster carers are more likely to get regular placements within their preferred age range.

Unlike many of the other agencies we are a non-profit organisation, committed to improving children's lives.



“Our foster carers are more likely to get regular placements within their preferred age range.”



Why choose us

We offer our foster carers a great combination of support and rewards every step of the way on their fostering journey, including:

Support 24/7

We are committed to supporting our foster carers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year, including:

- One-to-one sessions with your Supervising Social Worker
- Support groups run locally across the city
- 'Out of hours' support
- A budding scheme for newly approved foster carers including a WhatsApp group

Birmingham Foster Carers Association

Birmingham Foster Carers Association (BFCA) is a registered charity who provide support to foster carers in Birmingham. It is run by carers, for carers!

The BFCA is part funded by Birmingham Children's Trust and works in partnership with us to:

- Support all carers
- Source, facilitate and promote relevant training
- Deliver / organise play schemes for children
- Provide new activities for fostering families

Independent Advice

We understand that sometimes you may want to access independent advice on fostering issues.

That's why we provide our foster carers with membership to the national organisation FosterTalk (www.fostertalk.org) which offers advice and information to carers on a range of issues, including income tax and finance, legislation, and allegations.

We also provide membership to New Family Social (newfamilysocial.org.uk) for our LGBTQ+ carers.



Ongoing Training and Development

We believe that our foster carers should be provided with the highest quality training and support to enable them to provide exceptional care for our children and young people.

We provide our carers opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills through a comprehensive free training programme and regular support groups, including:

1. Pre-approval - We prepare you for your new role with our 'Skills to Foster' training
2. Induction Programme - supporting you through your first year of fostering
3. Foster care development - deepening your skills and experience
4. Advanced programme - nationally accredited and specialist training

Starting training can be scary, so our programmes are developed by experienced practitioners and foster carers.

We keep our training relaxed and real, focusing on the most important part of the job - caring for our children.

We are proud to offer our carers:

- 85 online courses that you can dip into any time
- 40+ face-to-face courses taking place locally across the city
- An expert training team
- 10 foster care support groups across the city
- Foster carer led buddy groups
- Support of a creche where appropriate
- Training scheduled around school hours

In addition to this, we are committed to the development of our staff who are therapeutically trained in order that they can understand and support you with the care of the children you foster.

A Wrap Around Support Service

Birmingham Children's Trust works closely with many of our colleagues in ensuring that the needs of our children are met. This includes working with medical staff, education staff such as the Virtual School, and Therapeutic & Emotional Support Services (TESS).

Competitive Financial Package

We really value our foster carers and make sure they are rewarded fully for doing their very best for the children and young people they care for. We offer our carers a competitive financial package which is comparable to those paid elsewhere, including 28 days paid holiday per 12-month period.

Payments are made in two elements - the allowance (which is per child and dependent on their age), to cover costs such as food, clothes, travel, hobbies etc. plus a payment to the carer. These are paid together on a weekly basis.

You may see some independent fostering agencies advertising what looks like higher allowance amounts however, these payments are intended to cover all expenses which can add up very quickly. At Birmingham Children's Trust, we always ensure that none of our carers are ever out of pocket.



Rewards and Celebrations

We think our foster families do an amazing job looking after the city's most vulnerable children and so we arrange a number of rewards and celebrations throughout the year to thank them, including:

- Max Card - a discount card for foster families offering free or discounted entry into numerous attractions nationwide
- Vivup - a national scheme where you can get fantastic discounts on shopping, travel, entertainment and more!
- Annual Family Fun Day for foster carers, birth and foster children
- Annual Foster Carers Celebration Evening
- Welcome to Fostering Events for newly approved foster carers
- Annual Foster Carer Conference

Support Groups

We run support groups in different locations across the city ensuring accessibility to all our foster carers.

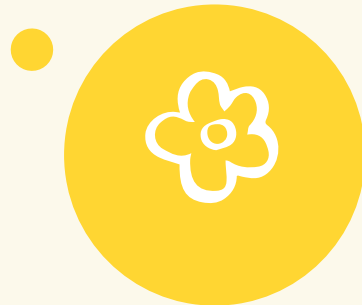
Birth Children's Support Group

We recognise that birth children often need and want support when part of a fostering family which is why we offer a support group to your birth children.

Men Versus Fostering Support Group

Male foster carers can sometimes feel unheard or not recognised as an equal in the foster home. It can also be difficult juggling work commitments with those of a foster carer and this can lead to male carers feeling isolated.

This support group offers support to those that attend in a safe space where they can discuss issues or concerns that they may not feel comfortable discussing in a wider arena.

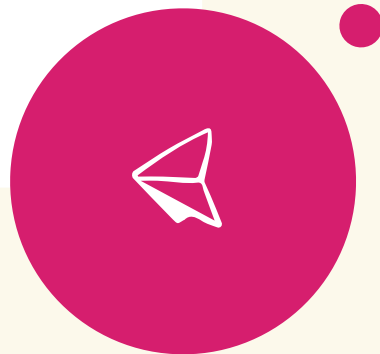




Transfer to us

If you're already a foster carer with another agency and are thinking of a change then contact our friendly team on **0121 303 7575** who can explain the process involved in transferring to us, as well as the great support and rewards we offer our carers.

We work closely to the Fostering Network (**thefosteringnetwork.org.uk**) Transfer Protocol which gives full guidance on references, notice periods, and payments etc.



Information Events



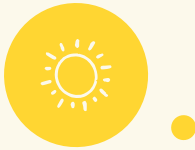
We hold a full calendar of information evenings throughout the year for people who are considering fostering. We run a face-to-face and virtual offer on a bi-monthly basis.

The evenings consist of foster carers talking about the realities, challenges, and rewards of fostering children and young people, as well as a worker advising of the practical requirements you need to become a foster carer.

You will also have the opportunity to speak with the carers as well as our workers who will be able to answer any questions or concerns you may have about the process to become a foster carer in a safe and secure environment.



For dates, times and how to register, please visit **www.fosterbirmingham.co.uk**



Join Birmingham's Biggest Family!

- 📍 www.fosterbirmingham.co.uk
- ☎ 0121 303 7575
- 📘 facebook.com/fosterbirmingham
- ✉ fostering@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk



BIRMINGHAM
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