

All about **Fostering**



A guide to help you understand the foster carer journey

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Hello!

Thank you for showing an interest in becoming one of our foster carers.

At Slough Children's Services Trust we have children of all ages and from a wide variety of backgrounds who need short or longer-term care.

Becoming a foster carer is one of the most rewarding roles you'll ever have. Watching a child – who may previously have been living with uncertainty or instability – grow and flourish under your care is beyond words.

Offering them a loving and stable home makes you – in our eyes – a very special person or family and we hope you decide to join our fostering 'family'.

This guide has a wealth of information about becoming a foster carer. In addition to the process, it answers many of the questions you may have. If you have queries that aren't covered here, our friendly fostering team will be happy to help.

Best wishes,



Jackie Pape, Head of
Fostering, Adoption
and Residential
Services

Slough Children's
Services Trust



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What is fostering?

Fostering may be a term you're familiar with. You're probably all too aware that there are children who need care outside their own family environment and are being looked after by children's services. Part of that care is to place these children with foster families who can provide them the love and support they need to be safe, secure and ultimately successful.

Foster families welcome these children into their homes and into their families, either in the short-term or long-term (permanent) basis, and provide them with stability and a sense of belonging.

Many different people become foster carers and foster families come from a wide variety of

backgrounds and circumstances. Some families have a mum and a dad, some families just a mum or just a dad. Some families have two mums or two dads. There is no such thing as a typical foster family as every one is unique.

Types of fostering

General fostering is probably the scheme most people are familiar with. This is a full-time fostering scheme for children from birth to 18 years. However, it can in itself be divided into different categories – emergency, short-term or long-term. There are other types too, as detailed on the following pages.



'My previous foster carer was so chilled and basically the best. She cared for me so much'
Child Looked After

Types of fostering

Emergency foster care, as the name suggests, is about providing a home to a child at short notice, so families need to be prepared to take a child into their home at any time of day or night and have them stay for a few days.

Short-term foster care can be planned, but could also be with very short notice, and provides a temporary place to stay until the child can return home to their own family or a longer-term arrangement can be made.

Long-term or permanent fostering allows children and young people to stay with a family until they reach adulthood if they cannot return to live with their birth family. This follows

a matching process, including introductions, so that the child and the foster family can get to know each other gradually before the child moves in. This type of fostering can suit families who prefer to have longer-term arrangements, and fewer changes of foster placements. It provides stability to that child or young person and enables them to develop a sense of belonging.

Home from Home is a part-time fostering scheme that provides respite care, giving parents or carers a break from caring for their child on a full time basis, and is in a family setting. The child will be matched with a family and will stay with the same family each time.



Types of fostering

Remand foster care provides a young person with a home when they have been remanded into the community (rather than custody) and have to live away from their family while their case is resolved through the courts. It can be for anything from a few nights to a few months, depending on how long the process takes, and often at short notice.

About Slough Children's Services Trust

Slough Children's Services Trust is an independent, not-for-profit company providing social care and support services to children, young people and families. The Trust was

established in 2015 by the Department for Education after two Ofsted inspections of Slough Borough Council judged their children's services provision 'inadequate'.

Since its creation, the Trust has been working at full pace to improve the services we offer to vulnerable children and their families. We haven't done this alone. We've worked closely with Slough Borough Council – who are joint Corporate Parents with us – to make sure every service working with vulnerable children and families is linked, is better and that we work effectively and efficiently, together.





How long will it take to become a foster carer?

As we're sure you'll understand, there are a number of checks that need to be carried out before we can place a child in your care, as well as training to be had on your part to better prepare you for becoming a foster family.

We do, of course, aim to get these undertaken in the most efficient and effective manner possible. The whole process should take no longer than six months from when we receive your application. You can find out more about what these assessments include on page 14.

Are foster carers paid?

As a foster carer you receive a weekly allowance to cover the cost of caring for a child in your

home. The allowance is based on the age of the child or young person and covers all food, clothing, pocket money, heating, utilities, telephone calls, entertainment, leisure, and other normal day to day expenses involved in caring for a child.

In addition to this, you will also receive a fostering fee. There are different levels of fee (known as tiers) which reflect the age of the child or young person in your care and also the increasing level of skill, experience and the training which you bring to the role.

All children aged 3 and 4 in England can also access an additional 15 hours free childcare from Sept 2018 (30 hours in total).



Are foster carers paid?

The chart below shows the allowances and fees (correct as of January 2018).

Age of child	Weekly fostering fee			Child's Allowance
	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	
0-4	£200	£230	£400	£141.70
5-10	£200	£230	£400	£161.40
11-15	£200	£230	£400	£200.99
16-17	£200	£230	£400	£244.50

There are many ways you can progress as a professional foster carer and this can be discussed with you during your assessment.

Each year after a successful annual review, we celebrate your success with a £200 'thank you'.

Why foster with us?

SCST is a not-for-profit organisation and, as the statutory (legal) provider of children's social care in Slough, the children who need fostering are in our care. We operate as an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) within the Trust and we are registered and inspected by Ofsted for that service.

Our policy is to try to place children locally, before considering families further afield, so that they maintain links that are important to them. If a child is placed further away, we do all we can to maintain local links and to include children in all our celebrations, events and consultations.

Compared to many agencies, the Trust is smaller and, we like to think, more intimate and able to offer a 'family feel' to our valued foster families.



Why foster with us?

Our foster carers, who look after children on a longer-term or permanent basis, will be able to access both the fostering team and the child's social worker in the same location, which makes decision-making and communication much faster and easier.

As a foster family for the Trust we can offer you other benefits too, including:

- Excellent supervision and local support
- Generous mileage allowance
- Out of hours support
- A programme of regular training events as well as financial incentives for completing training, helping you progress your career as a foster carer
- Regular support groups, social events and newsletters to keep you informed
- Organised peer-to-peer support through the Slough Fostering Association (drop-in coffee mornings; social activities, fundraising events)
- Opportunity for you to be a part of new innovations to support and receive help when needed via a dedicated carer-led respite service
- An annual awards event for our foster families to recognise their contribution to Slough's children and young people
- Fees paid for annual subscription to

We wanted an agency that was closer to our home and we really like the team at Slough Children's Services Trust'
Foster Carer



Why foster with us?

the Fostering Network which includes, among other things, subscription to Foster Care magazine, regular e-newsletters, access to online resources, 24-hour dedicated helplines and a multitude of discounts on various activities and days out as well as special members' prices for training, publications and events

- Holiday and birthday additional payments for all children in your care
- Additional therapeutic support for children requiring extra help.

new
family
social

Strong and happy LGBT
adoptive & foster families
throughout the UK

coramBAAF
ADOPTION & FOSTERING ACADEMY

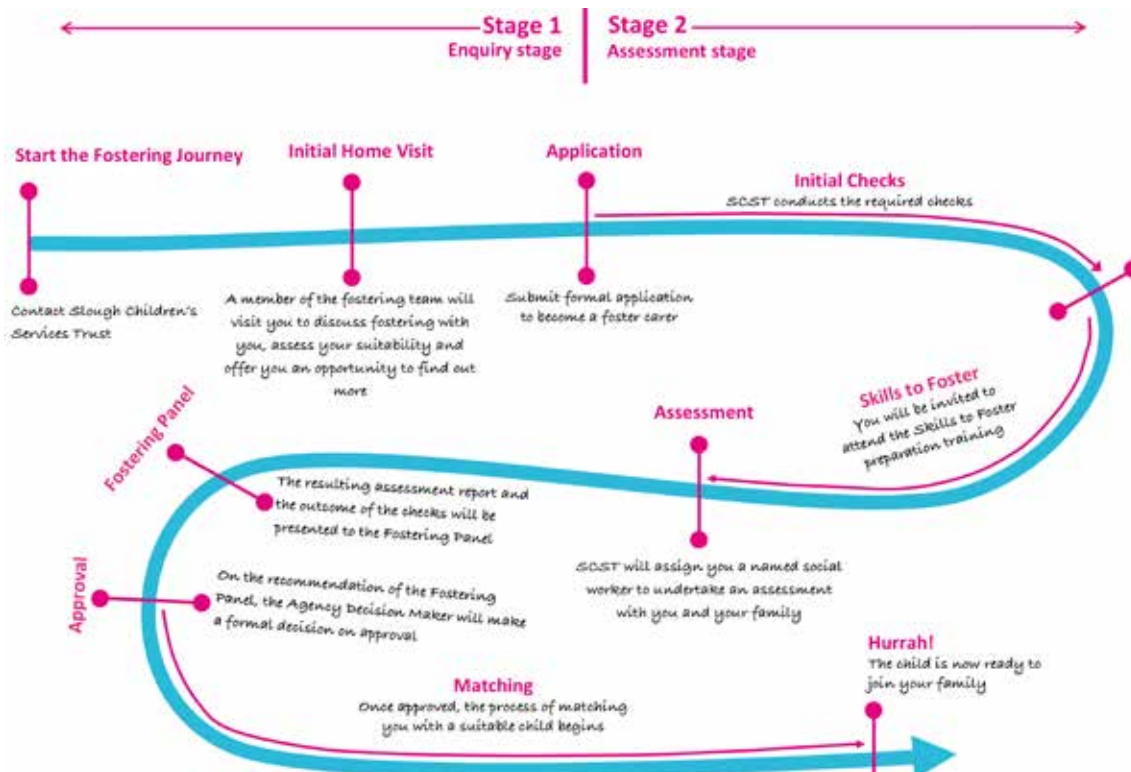
Fosterline
0800 040 7675
your fostering advice service

www.fosterline.info

**The
Fostering
Network**



The process





The process

Preparing you to foster

Once you have received your information pack we will contact you to arrange an initial home visit.

A representative from our recruitment team will arrange to meet you to discuss in more detail the process, and to find out basic information about you, your family and your home.

In Slough, we value our foster families' involvement and believe it is important for potential foster families to have the chance to talk to our existing families.

Throughout the recruitment and assessment process we aim to give you opportunities to meet other foster families who can offer you

support and enable you to learn about their experience of fostering through Slough Children's Services Trust.

The social worker who completes your initial home visit report will keep in contact with you during the initial stages to ensure you are fully supported and that any questions you may have are answered.

Registering

If you decide that becoming a foster family is right for you then you will need to complete an application form. Fostering involves the whole family, so if you have a partner they will need to be part of the application process too.

'When we meet with other professionals, they want to hear your thoughts as the foster carer. Your opinion is valued and that matters'
Foster Carer



The process

Skills to Foster training

You will be invited to attend a preparation course called Skills To Foster. This course offers you an opportunity to find out more about fostering.

You will learn about why children need to be looked after, how to help children manage their feelings and behaviours, the roles of SCST staff in helping you and the child while placed with you as well as the support to you as a foster family.

The courses are run locally over around 6 sessions and are offered during the daytime, evenings and at weekends. If you have a partner you must both attend.

If you have any children they will be invited to attend a children's preparation group to talk about what fostering is about and what it might mean for them.

We also have regular events for the children within foster families, so they get the opportunity to meet other children of foster families.

Checks

The safety and security of our children is SCST's top priority and, by law, we have to undertake rigorous checks on all people in the household. Early on in the process we will carry out Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) and Local Authority checks.



The process

'One day we woke up and my foster carer said "who wants to go into London?" We went to M&M World and had such a good day. It's a nice memory'
Child Looked After

Child health and education checks will be carried out on any children in the household and we will also ask you to provide employment, medical and personal references.

All these checks may seem daunting, but we will guide you every step of the way to ensure the process runs as smoothly as possible.

The assessment

You will be assigned a social worker who will begin the assessment with you and other

members of your household. The assessment involves a number of home visits and is designed to help acknowledge your strengths and look at any areas where we might need to offer extra support to help you undertake the fostering task.

This part of the process usually takes around four months and there are good reasons why everything needs to be explored in depth with you as we need to get it right for the children that you will care for and for your own family.

Fostering panel

Once all the information has been gathered from the home visits and the checks, a report



The process

is written by the social worker. This is shared with you to make sure it is accurate and then it is presented to the Fostering Panel, which recommends approvals and reviews at SCST

You are, of course, invited to attend the Fostering Panel meeting. Based on the recommendation from the Fostering Panel, the Agency Decision Maker will then give the formal approval of suitability to foster.

Once approved you would be registered as a foster carer with SCST and can look forward to the placement of your first child(ren).

Training and support

As a foster family for the Trust you would be part

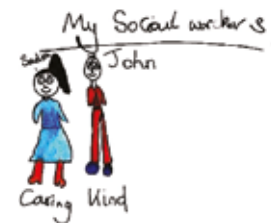
of a team supporting the child in your care.

As such we can offer a comprehensive training programme to enable you to undertake your role and develop your career as a foster carer.

Further training

In addition, we offer ongoing training opportunities on topics that other foster carers have identified as being useful, such as therapeutic training to help you to develop your skills in understanding children, attachment, first aid, promoting contact, safeguarding and trauma.

You can also take part





The process

'Go for it! It's life changing – not just for the children and young people in your care – but for you, too!'
Foster Carer

in training alongside other professionals and study for qualifications such as National Vocational Qualifications or BTEC.

Foster care standards

We will support you within your first year of fostering and this support will continue even as you become more confident in your role.

We will help you to meet the 'Training and Development Standards (TDS) which all foster carers in the country must work towards.

Your supervision

You will be allocated a supervising social worker (SSW) who will meet with you and your family regularly (at least monthly) and provide advice, guidance and ongoing support.

Out of hours support

The fostering team operates a duty desk which you can call if your social worker is not available. Outside office hours you can telephone our out-of-hours fostering support service.

We also run regular support groups for all of our foster families which enables mutual support and advice to be shared.



'Foster carers should make sure they really get to know the child/young person in their care and know their interests, hobbies, likes and dislikes'
Child Looked After

Frequently asked questions

What is the role of the foster family?

- To provide a caring, secure family environment
- To meet all the child's day to day individual needs
- To promote contact for the child with their family wherever possible
- To work alongside children's services team workers and other agencies
- To help prepare a child to move back to their family or onto a new permanent placement through long-term fostering or adoption
- To facilitate the school run and keep a child in education.

What are the differences between fostering and adoption?

Fostering means you look after a child on behalf of a local authority (or, in our case, the Trust) from a few days to a number of years. Adopting a child means you become the child's legal parent.

Why do some children need fostering?

There are a number of reasons why children can't be cared for in their own family and may require fostering. Children may have suffered sexual or physical abuse, they may have been neglected or their parents may have experienced problems, making it difficult for them to care for their children.



Frequently asked questions

It could be a temporary crisis or it may be that longer-term care is needed.

What is important is that there is a foster family available nearby that can provide them with the care that they need. Many children will return to their own families but for some children, permanent alternative care must be found. For many of these children living in a family environment is the best option.

Contact between children, their parents and other family members is usually maintained while the child is in foster care and foster families often have a role in supporting these meetings, by transporting them and supporting them before and after birth family contact.

Can I foster if I am lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?

We welcome LGBT foster families. You can be heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. There is no such thing as a typical foster family. Every family is unique.

Can I foster if I am single?

You can be single, married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner. A good support network of family or close friends is essential for all applicants.

Can I foster if I am male?

Both women and men make great foster carers. It is important to have relevant childcare



'We think it's amazingly rewarding. You can help children and young people change their lives for the better'
Foster Carer

Frequently asked questions

experience and have an understanding of children's needs. We have a support group specifically for male foster carers.

Can I foster if I do not have any children?

Yes you can. The important thing is that you can offer support, guidance and a positive caring family environment to help children feel

secure and valued. There will be challenges, but with support and guidance from the family placement service, other foster families and professionals, you will meet these challenges and gain tremendous satisfaction from

'My foster carer has always been there for me, even when I got into a bit of trouble. She has always been so calm and just so nice'

Child Looked After

having been an important part of a child's life.

Do I need a qualification to foster?

No formal qualifications are necessary but foster carers will need to have had experience of caring for their own or other people's children or have relevant professional experience.

We offer training and support to enhance your skills as well as providing you with an opportunity to develop new ones.

What matters most is that you have the time and space, commitment, patience, energy and, above all, the desire to care and work with both the children and their parents.



Frequently asked questions

Do you recruit foster families from my ethnicity?

We believe it is best for children to live with foster families who reflect and understand a child's heritage, ethnic origin, culture and language, and so we need families from all types of backgrounds. Ultimately, we are looking for families who can offer support, guidance and a positive family environment in which children feel secure, cared for and valued. We encourage enquiries from all ethnic groups to ensure we can complement and promote a child's ethnicity and cultural heritage.

Am I the right age to foster?

Foster carers must be a minimum of 21 years old

to apply. While there are no upper age limits for fostering, a carer must be fit enough to meet the needs of the child.

Can I foster if I live in a rented accommodation?

You will need to have a spare bedroom if you wish to foster children but you do not need to own your house. Your home will need to meet health and safety regulations and the national minimum fostering standards in terms of hygiene, play and homework space. This will be assessed during the assessment process.

Can I foster if I smoke?

We will not place a child under 5 in a household



Frequently asked questions

where adults smoke. We would not refuse enquiries from people who smoke, but we would strongly encourage anyone who does smoke to take active steps to give up, as this is likely to benefit you and any children in your care.

Is fostering considered a job?

All foster carers are registered with and contracted to a local authority or a voluntary or independent agency. Foster families are self-employed workers who work as part of a team around a child.

We prefer to talk about it in terms of a 'family-based role' rather than a traditional job.

Is there a particular need in Slough?

We are currently looking for families for children aged 0-18 from a range of ethnic backgrounds, and are particularly looking for families who may be able to look after school age children, teenagers, sibling groups and children with special needs.

We are particularly interested in hearing from you if you can offer a home to a child or siblings over the age of 10 years.

In addition, we are actively recruiting foster families who want to commit to caring for a child on a longer term basis, for example from 10-18 years of age.





Frequently asked questions

Can I foster and still work?

Yes, you can. We have a Home from Home scheme, which involves caring for a child with a disability. This could be for a few hours a week (day or evening) on a regular basis, a weekly overnight stay, a weekend once a month, a day a week in the school holidays.

You'll have to undertake our usual application process, vetting and training but being able to help out in this way can be very rewarding, in terms of support for the child's primary carer.

'If you want to help children, please talk to the fostering team. This time next year, you could be doing the best job in the world!'
Foster Carer



Useful websites, numbers and advice lines

Gov.uk – Becoming a foster carer

<https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers>

The Fostering Network – The UK's leading fostering charity

<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/>

Fosterline – Your fostering advice service

<http://www.fosterline.info/>

New Family Social – Supporting lesbian, gay, bi and trans families

<http://www.newfamilysocial.org.uk/>

FosterTalk – Provider of professional support services to foster carers

<https://www.fostertalk.org/>



Notes

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Notes

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Find out more about us:

Website: www.scstrust.co.uk

Facebook: [sloughchildrensservicestrust](https://www.facebook.com/sloughchildrensservicestrust)

Twitter: [@SCS_Trust](https://twitter.com/SCS_Trust)