



Foster Care

Northumberland Foster Carer Role Description

POST:	Northumberland County Council Foster Carer (Mainstream)
EMPLOYMENT:	Self-employed basis
RESPONSIBLE TO:	Supervising Social Worker: Fostering Service

PURPOSE: As a Northumberland Mainstream Foster Carer, you provide a safe and caring environment for a child or children, who are not related or known to you, in your own home while they are unable to live with their own family. You work as part of a professional team to protect children's welfare and best interests. The role is similar to being a parent, where you share parental responsibility with others; helping children through extraordinary and often difficult times in their lives.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOSTER CARE:

Time Limited Fostering (Short to Medium Term)

These are stays of a few nights up to three years, depending on the care plan. The greatest need is care for:

- School Age Children and Teenagers
- Sibling groups to keep brothers and sisters together

Specific help you may provide includes helping teenagers prepare for independence or a return home; parent and child placements (usually mum and baby) supporting them to develop parenting skills; helping children with any missed schooling and development of routines; encouraging education and participation in activities.

Long Term or Permanent Fostering (Children aged 7 plus)

This is a key type of fostering. Children often need a long-term foster family until they are ready to fly the nest. Most children are aged between 7 and 12 years old when they come to stay with their long-term foster family.

Short Breaks (2 to 3 days at a time)

Our short-break care service offers breaks for children including disabled children and their families. Some occur weekly, others monthly and some just in the school holidays.

Respite care for foster families

Weekend or holiday placements for children and young people, but can be required for odd weekdays. These stays may be planned regular breaks and / or ad-hoc breaks to support foster children and their families. Most foster carers offer this as part of their support to other foster families.

PERSONAL QUALITIES AND VALUES:

- Flexibility: Have an ability to work effectively throughout changing circumstances.
- Social Confidence: Work easily with others.
- Resilience: Have a thick skin, especially when children express a desire to be elsewhere
- Empathy and Understanding: See things through the eyes of others, particularly the child or young person; appreciate the difficulties parents face and be able to work closely with people who are important to the child in a non-judgemental way.
- Composure: Think clearly and remain calm during times of stress or high pressure; thrive on having a busy household.
- Patience
- A sense of humour
- Wish to help, nurture and develop children and young people
- Want to give something back to your local community and make a difference
- Would like to offer a safe and stable home environment for vulnerable children and young people
- Have a sense of responsibility and a desire to care for others

EXPERIENCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

You need to attain the following National Minimum Standards within your first year of fostering, and so will work from your assessment onwards to develop and demonstrate these skills and competencies:

Standard 1: Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people

Listen to and take into account the experiences, wishes and concerns of children and their families. Help children and young people develop the skills to deal with discrimination and enhance self-worth. Be committed to equality and diversity, understanding children's origin, religion and culture.

Standard 2: Understand your role as a foster carer

Work with the children's services teams and contribute to planning for each child through meetings. Understand the importance of confidentiality and follow the Fostering Service policies and procedures.

Standard 3: Understand health and safety

Keep your home safe, clean and hygienic and free of avoidable hazards. Understand and promote 'healthy care' including hygiene, risk taking and physical, mental, emotional and sexual health.

Standard 4: Know how to communicate effectively

Be able to communicate with children in a manner appropriate to their age and understanding. Understand the importance of keeping clear and accurate records and be able to share and obtain information both verbally and in written form. Seek and consider the viewpoints of others, particularly children and young people, in setting and deciding plans, activities and progress.

Standard 5: Understand the development of children and young people

Understand children's ability to form relationships and the impact each child's background may have on this. Encourage and support children and young people with their education and help them overcome setbacks. Set appropriate boundaries and manage children's behaviour in a constructive way.

Standard 6: Safeguard children and young people

Ensure that the child is cared for in an environment where they are safe from harm and abuse. Be available and accessible, unless otherwise planned, in order to provide a good standard of care to young people.

Standard 7: Develop yourself

Understand the implications of foster care on yourself and your family, and attend all agreed training. Understand the purpose of regular supervision and reviews, and use these opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to your role.



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Northumberland County Council



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every child matters in Northumberland