

Young people's involvement in recruitment

Looked-After young people are becoming more and more involved in the recruitment of foster carers, including talking to people in the community at our information evenings and taking part in staff interviews.

Rachael and Simon joined the 'skills to foster' course – the training that prospective foster carers complete before beginning their formal fostering assessment. They tell us how they found their experience.



Pictured: Marketing & Recruitment Officer Caroline Matthews; Participation Officer Anya Proud; Recruitment Participants: Simon Turner and Rachael Young

Why have you taken part in the Skills to Foster course?

It fits with other work that our different young people's groups, like YPIN (Young People in Northumberland) are trying to achieve in combating the negative image that society has of teenagers as a whole. We want to promote positive images of young people; and where there are problems, explain reasons for this behaviour and how people like our foster carers help.

What was your remit for taking part in the course?

We were asked to talk to the prospective foster carers about our experiences. We wanted to get across our positive messages about foster care and young people—particularly talking about the differences between long term and short foster care and how lots of placement moves can have a negative effect on young people. We explained what fostering was like for us, and talked about getting through bad experiences in our lives.

What do you think now that you've taken part?

It was interesting to learn more about the course that people complete as part of their fostering assessment—it's a very comprehensive course and the participants were very interested in both the course and our input on the day. They said that it

was good to have young people's opinions. We felt it was worthwhile, and was a good way to interact with prospective foster carers, as we felt very included in the process. The participants asked us a lot of questions including what activities do you do with foster carers?; How do foster carers help with education?; What it's like moving in with a foster family?; What was your experience of foster care? Afterwards the staff taking the course asked for our input on who we thought would make good foster carers from those that attended the course.

Why do think fostering is important?

We couldn't thank Northumberland enough for giving us the help that we needed . Fostering helps to save your life. We could have been going through hell, but fostering gave us a baseline in our lives—structure, rules and boundaries.

If people are thinking about fostering, we really think you should get in touch with the Northumberland Fostering Service:

- Go for it, because you are often helping to save a child's life
- You could be helping a child to get out of danger or out of a predicament in their life
- With older children you can help people to be normal teenagers
- We might be going through a bad patch and foster carers really help us to get through it

Since attending the course, at least one couple have changed their minds about the age group they wish to foster—they originally were nervous about looking after teenagers, but after speaking with Rachel, Simon and Gloria, they are now looking to become approved to care for older children too.

Thank you to Rachael, Simon and Gloria and our other young people for your continued participation in our recruitment activities.

A 'mint' foster carer should:

- Make young people feel wanted and help them to be included as part of your family
- Allow young people space, privacy and relevant freedom
- Forget about teenage stereotypes—we're all individual and different!
- To be caring in a fostering role
- Be prepared for different types of behaviour