Welcome to Oldham Fostering Service

Thank you for your recent enquiry about fostering with Oldham Council. We hope this information pack answers most of your questions and helps you decide if fostering is right for you.

If after reading this pack you would like us to visit you to discuss fostering in more detail, please complete and return the enclosed request a visit form. We will then contact you to arrange a convenient time to visit.

Deciding to foster is a big decision and we are here to help you decide. If you are unsure if fostering is right for you, or you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

T: 0161 770 6600
E: fostering@oldham.gov.uk

What is fostering?

Oldham Council believes that the best place for children to live is with their own family. Sadly, this is not always possible. When children cannot live at home, the next best alternative is usually for them to live in a foster family.

Fostering is caring for someone else’s child in your home whilst they cannot live with their own family. This is usually because of problems their parents are experiencing such as illness, relationship difficulties or substance misuse. Or the child may have been neglected or abused.

Fostering involves doing all the things any good parent would do including making sure their health is good, helping them do well at school, to make friends and enjoy their hobbies.

Foster carers work as part of a team along with the child’s family, social workers and other professionals. They also help children retain strong links with their family. This can be through supervised visits or phone calls between the child and their family (if safe to do so).

Looking after someone else’s children – seeing them develop and do well is a very enriching and rewarding experience. You really will make a difference to children’s lives. But it can also be hard, so we will be with you every step of the way to offer support and provide you with ongoing training that you will need to make fostering a success.
Can I foster?

There is no such thing as a typical foster carer and you will be surprised just how many people can foster.

We need a range of foster carers to meet the diverse needs of all our children, who come from all walks of life and from a wide variety of backgrounds.

It doesn't matter whether you're:
- Single, married, divorced, in a civil partnership or living with someone
- Male or female
- Working or unemployed
- Heterosexual, gay or lesbian
- Living in your own home or renting
- Able bodied or living with a disability
- White or from a minority ethnic background

What is important is you as an individual and the personal qualities you possess. We need people who are caring, patient, and resilient, and who enjoy working with children. A sense of humour also helps!

We also ask for you to be over 21, have room in your home, and have the time and energy to care for a child.

Smokers
If you smoke you will not be able to foster children under the age of five and you must smoke outside.

Will anything prevent me from becoming a foster carer?
You cannot foster children if you have been convicted of certain criminal convictions. Some offences, notably crimes of violent or sexual nature or against children, legally prevent a person working with children.

If you are still unsure about if you can foster please just ask!
Your questions answered

Can I foster if I have children already? Yes you can. You will need to consider the impact that fostering will have on your family and we will talk to your children during the assessment process. If you have children under the age of two we would recommend waiting until your child is older.

I smoke – will I be considered? Yes. We want our children to be as healthy as possible, so we follow recognised guidelines. If you or anyone in your household smokes, you will not be able to foster a child under the age of five. You must also smoke outside the house.

Do I need a medical check up? All foster carers have to undergo a medical check up as part of their assessment. It is important that you are physically and emotionally fit to cope with the demands of fostering.

Can I foster if I work full time? Yes you can, but this will depend on your circumstances and the needs and age of the child you would like to foster.

I don’t drive. Can I still foster? Yes you can, as long as you are able to take the child to and from school and attend meetings and contact visits.

I don’t have a spare room. Can I still foster? Yes you can, but this will depend on your circumstances and whether or not you would be prepared to move.
What is One2One fostering?
One2One fostering is about giving a young person a chance to live in a family as an alternative to living in a children's home. Our young people need One2One foster carers to help them overcome a difficult start in life. They will have experienced significant neglect or trauma. They may present challenging behaviour or have difficulty trusting adults and will need your support to develop a trusting relationship to help them to achieve their potential. They will have a range of emotional and welfare needs and probably will have experienced a number of placement breakdowns in their lives. One2One placements are crucial in giving our young people stability and a positive experience of family life.
As a One2One foster carer, you will be at the heart of a professional team. The team will include therapeutic social workers, psychologist, young person's mentor, schools, health and any other appropriate professionals in the young person's life. Your role in the team will be to provide a warm, caring, safe and stable foster home for a young person.
Young people in need of therapeutic fostering often experience chronic and complex difficulties, which together we can help them overcome. Therapeutic means having a good effect on the body and mind. Working in this way enables foster carers to help young people overcome trauma, achieve a sense of self-worth and wellbeing.

How we will support you
We know this is a challenging role and we will be with you every step of the way. We will work with you to help you develop the skills that you will need. Your skills will enable you to help the young person heal emotionally and have fun at the same time. We will provide all the support you will need to help you to understand and manage the behaviours of the young person in your care. Our foster carers receive 24/7 support from our highly trained professionals. The nature of these placements attract higher rates of pay in recognition of your hard work and dedication to One2One care.

Your personal qualities
You don’t need specialist qualifications but your life experience and personal qualities can make a big difference to a young person. If you have the desire to make a difference for a young person, are a good listener, have a great sense of humour, plenty of energy and always see the bright side of life – you already have the qualities we are looking for!
Children in foster care come from all walks of life and are of all ages, from babies through to teenagers. They are likely to have experienced difficult and sad times in their lives.

Every child is an individual and will react differently to their past experiences. Some will be angry, confused and afraid, whilst others may be quiet and shy. What they all have in common is that they are separated from their families and need a foster carer to help them through this difficult time in their lives.

**We need foster carers for:**

- **Older children, including teenagers**
  
  Caring for any teenager has its ups and downs but for a young person who has had a distressing and unsettled childhood the teenage years may be especially difficult. Teenage years are when young people are finding their feet so, although it is challenging, foster carers can have a vital role in helping young people to prepare for adult life and develop their confidence in themselves.

- **Brothers and sisters**

  Going to live with a new foster family can be very scary, but keeping brothers and sisters together is one less thing for them to worry about. That is why we need foster carers who have the space to care for more than one child.

- **Children on a long-term basis**

  Most children who are fostered will return to their birth families. However, if this is not possible, some children require foster carers to look after them until they reach adulthood and are able to live independently.

- **Children with disabilities**

  Some children have physical or learning disabilities or a combination of special needs. That is why we need foster carers with special skills and experience to care for children and young people needing that extra little bit of help.

- **Children from ethnic minorities**

  We try to place children in families that match, as closely as possible, their racial, religious, cultural and linguistic background. We always require foster carers from all parts of the community, especially Pakistani, Bangladeshi and dual heritage foster carers.
What support is available?

We understand that fostering isn’t an easy job. That’s why we make sure that our carers have all the advice, guidance and training they need to make fostering a success.

As an Oldham foster carer you will:

- Have your own supervising social worker who will visit you regularly and always be there to offer advice and support
- Receive ongoing training, including first aid, child protection and the opportunity to work towards the Qualification and Credit Framework
- Have access to specialist services to help you care for your foster child. These include a specialist looked after children’s nurse, psychologist, counsellor and educational liaison service
- Receive competitive payments and allowances
- Have access to support groups and Oldham Foster Care Forum where you can meet other carers and share experiences
- Receive regular newsletters
- Become a member of FosterTalk giving you access to independent support services and discounts

You will also be visited by the child’s social worker who will make sure everyone is happy and that there are no problems.
The assessment process

All foster carers have to be carefully assessed. This is to make sure that fostering is right for you and your family. The whole process normally takes around six months.

**Home visit**

If having read this pack you would like us to visit you, please complete the request a visit form. We will then come out to see you. The visit is to answer any questions you may have and for us to gather a little information about you.

**Registration of interest**

After we have been out to see you, and if you still want to continue, we will ask you to complete a registration of interest form. Once we have received and accepted your registration of interest form, you have formally registered your interest to foster with Oldham Fostering Service.

**Stage one:**

**Checks and references**

All prospective foster carers have to undergo a number of checks, including police checks (DBS), education, health and probation.

We will also ask you to provide details of three referees, two of whom should not be related to you. Where appropriate, we may also need to seek references from significant ex-partners or grown up children.

**Preparation groups**

You will be invited to attend training, along with other prospective foster carers. This will help you find out about fostering in a lot more detail and will give you the opportunity to meet foster carers, and find out about fostering first hand.

**Pre-assessment decision**

Once you have completed your training, we will make a decision on your suitability to progress to stage two.

We aim to complete stage one within two months of accepting your registration of interest.

**Stage two:**

**Assessment plan**

The plan will give you information about the assessment process, dates for meetings/visits and any further information required.

**Assessment**

All foster carers have to undergo an assessment. A fostering social worker will make several visits to your home and spend time getting to know you, gathering information about your skills and training needs, and discussing which child/children you might be able to support.

The information gathered will be used to write a report. Once the report is complete, you will have chance to comment on it. The report is then sent to Oldham Fostering Panel.

**Oldham Fostering Panel**

The panel is made up of fostering specialists, including social workers, foster carers and other professionals. They will consider your report and make a recommendation on your suitability to foster.

You will be invited to the panel, along with your social worker, and you will be able to contribute to the discussion.

**Agency Decision**

Based on the panel’s recommendation, the agency decision maker will then decide whether or not to approve you as a foster carer.

We aim to complete stage two within four months of receiving your notification to proceed to the assessment stage.

**You are ready to foster!**

Now the exciting part… once you have been approved as a foster carer, a link with a child or children will be made.
Different types of foster care

There are lots of kinds of fostering you can do depending on the skills, time and experience you have to offer. We will talk with you and help you decide what type of foster care would be best for you and your family.

Short-term foster care

Short-term foster carers look after a child for anything from a few days to one or two years. At the end of the placement the child is likely to return home to their families, or be placed with long-term foster carers or adopters.

Long-term foster care

It is always the preferred option for children to return to their birth families, where this is seen to be in their best interests. If this is not possible and adoption is not appropriate, a long-term family is required.

Parent and baby fostering

Parent and baby foster carers provide a home for a young parent and their baby.

Emergency foster care

Emergency foster carers provide a child with a place to go immediately, no matter what hour of a day or night. There is little time for preparation or planning. The child usually stays for a few days.

One2One fostering

One2One foster carers provide therapeutic placements for children and young people with complex needs. The children and young people are usually aged between 10 and 18 years.

This type of fostering provides a child or young person with a supportive family where they can build a trusting relationship with a foster carer whilst they receive therapy to help them overcome their traumatic experiences.

Some carers provide a mixture of care, or decide to change from one kind of fostering to another. Whatever your circumstances, we are happy to talk through all the different options and help you decide what is best for you and your family.
What will I get paid?

Oldham Fostering Service wants to offer fostering as a real career choice for those who have the skills and qualities to foster.

We offer competitive payments and allowances that recognise the true cost of bringing up children and that carers receive a fair payment for the work they do, their level of skills and experience and commitment to training.

We offer two fostering schemes, mainstream and One2One fostering.

### Mainstream Fostering Payments and Allowances 1/4/17 – 31/3/18

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### One2One Fostering

Payments 1/4/17 – 31/3/18

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**One2One foster carers**

Foster carers who hold, or are able and willing to work towards, Diploma level 3 and who care for a young person with a high level of complex needs. The foster carer will be part of the team around the child and will engage with regular therapeutic input to help them support and manage the young person’s placement. They will also support the young person to engage with weekly therapy where appropriate, with a view to matching as a long-term placement.

Carers will provide respite support to other specialist carers when appropriate.

**Additional payments**

Each child living with a foster carer will receive a birthday, festival and holiday payment.

The payments are calculated as follows:

- **Birthday** – one weeks basic fostering allowance
- **Festival** – one weeks basic fostering allowance
- **Holiday** – two weeks basic fostering allowance

We may also provide an additional payment for clothing when a child is first placed.

Further details of all payments are available on request.