



Becoming a Foster Carer

OWNER

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Becoming a Foster Carer

Looking after a child on behalf of the state is a serious responsibility and as such, BfFC's IFA recruits, assesses and supports a range of foster carers to meet the needs of children they provide care for.

The sections below set out how BfFC's procedures operate within the legal framework of the Fostering Regulations governing the 'approval' of foster carers.

The law and the approval of foster carers:

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 set out what fostering service providers must do by law. Children who are looked after by the local authority can only be placed with a foster carer if that foster carer has been robustly assessed and 'approved' by a fostering service registered with OFSTED.

The Regulations require that in order to be 'approved' as a foster carer, a number of checks and references must be completed and there must be a full assessment of whether someone is suitable. An assessment report is considered by a Fostering Panel before a decision is made on whether someone can be approved. Regulations also require that the approval is 'reviewed' at least once a year.

Those wishing to foster can apply to be a foster carer for any fostering service. If someone applies to foster for a local authority other than where they live or an independent provider, the authority in which he or she lives will be consulted for its views and informed if he or she is approved as a foster carer.

All those who apply to foster are subject to a robust assessment of their competence to fulfil the tasks of fostering. Applicants are required to take part in a preparation group and their assessment can only be presented at panel once this training has been attended. BfFC's IFA uses the CoramBAAF Form F Assessment framework and Fostering Network good practice guidelines.

The Form F assessment report will be considered at the Fostering Panel for approval. Applicants are encouraged to attend Panel to give their views in person. While the Panel will make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicant, the final decision is made by a senior manager of the fostering service - the 'Agency Decision Maker'.

It is important to note that Foster carers can only be approved by one service/agency at a time.

Approval terms:

Your formal notice of approval will be stated in your Foster Carer Agreement. This will include 'approval terms', that are:

- the 'category' of fostering for which you are approved. It could be any of the following:
 - ✓ **Short-term Fostering:**
Short-term carers provide temporary care for a child/young person, who is unable to live with their family. The placement can last from a few days or weeks, months or longer. The placement is temporary while plans for permanency are made and carried out. Regular contact with significant people such as birth family is an important part of short-term fostering. Short term fostering includes taking children in emergencies.
 - ✓ **Long-term Fostering:**
Long-term foster carers offer permanent homes until adulthood and beyond where adoption

is not suitable for a child/young person. Children will be formally matched to their long-term foster carers at panel and the expectation is that long term foster carers will provide [staying put](#) post 18. Usually, children matched long term will not have the same frequency of social work visits in order to maximise the feeling of being at home.

✓ **Respite Care:**

Respite carers offer overnight support to other foster carers. This could be on short notice but also planned. BFFC's IFA seeks to match respite carers with other foster carers to ensure consistency for the children as they will often become part of the regular support network and will know each other well.

✓ **Emergency Care:**

This is a particular type of placement in which a vulnerable child has to be placed into care under very short notice, usually in under 24 hours. There is no planning or introductions that take place beforehand. These placements will last until a more appropriate placement has been found by the fostering agency, usually one or two nights. These situations can also arise out of office hours.

✓ **Short Breaks for Disabled Children:**

These carers provide respite care to children with disabilities living with their birth families. This can be anything from one night a month to a number of weekends, depending on the needs of the child or your availability. Short breaks requires a long term commitment as often families require the support over many years.

✓ **Parent and Baby/Child Fostering:**

This type of fostering supports parents and their babies/children who require guidance and possibly an assessment of their parenting skills. The parents of the children can be minors but also adults

- the 'number of children' whom can live with you at any one time

The Children's Act 1989 limited the number of placements that a foster carer can take at any one time to three. This is often referred to as the 'usual fostering limit'. If a carer exceeds the limit, he or she will be treated as running a children's home unless:

- ✓ all of the children are siblings OR
- ✓ the 'Area Authority' has agreed an 'exemption'. The 'Area Authority' is the local authority covering the area in which you live.

- the 'age range' of the children you are approved to take.

There may also be other terms or restrictions, depending on matching and your circumstances.

Suitable approval terms would have been discussed during the assessment and will be influenced by the wishes of the person applying to foster, their family circumstances and other considerations.

[The Foster Care Agreement:](#)

Fostering Regulations state that all foster carers must sign a Foster Care Agreement with their fostering service when they are approved. The Agreement sets out the terms and conditions of the partnership between the fostering service and you as a foster carer. It is important that you are familiar with all the responsibilities, expectations and requirements set out in the Foster Care Agreement, including your responsibility to notify us of any changes in your household. Your

Agreement will be renewed at least every 3 years. Please see an example of a Foster Care Agreement in the [local resources](#):

BfC's IFA recruitment process

For a detailed understanding of our agency's recruitment process, please see our [local resources](#).