



Types of Fostering Within BFfC's IFA

Information for foster carers

OWNER

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Introduction

There are many different types of Fostering and the one below are offered by BFFC's IFA.

Types of Fostering

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Bridging:

Bridging foster carers provide a family home for children who are moving from one placement to another for a variety of reasons. Bridging placements provide a neutral foster home, usually for no more than six months.

What happens when the child/ren become 18 years old

Legally, the children are then adults which means they are no longer in foster care. However, BfFC's IFA encourages all foster carers to continue looking after children who have lived with them for considerable time beyond their 18th birthday. This will then be under a **Staying Put Arrangement**.

It is the next step after fostering and is an arrangement between the foster carers, the child/ren who have reached 18 years and the local authority. The ex-foster carers enter into a 'staying put' arrangement whereby the young person continues to live with their ex foster carers and the carers have a licence agreement to continue to care for the young adult care leaver at least up to 19 but in some situations up to 25 years old.

The arrangement ensures the young adult can experience a transition similar to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to successfully manage their independence when they do move on. As part of the care planning, first discussions around a possible staying put arrangement should be initiated when the child in your care reaches the age of 16 years.

How many children can I foster?

On approval BfFC's IFA's ADM will confirm how many children you are approved for usually no more than three, what age, gender and category of approval. There are times, however, when BfFC's IFA may ask you to care for a child/young person outside your approval range if it is felt that you would be able to meet the child's needs.

When this happens, BfFC's IFA can request a variation of your approval for a specific time either to allow for longer term plans to be made or for a review of your approval as a foster carer to be done so that your approval status can be changed in order to accommodate the child for a longer period. This variation will be authorised by BfFC's IFA's ADM.

Exemptions

The 'usual fostering limit' is three, so nobody may foster more than three children unless:

- The foster children are all siblings (then there is no upper limit); or
- The local authority within whose area the foster carer lives, exempts the carer from the usual fostering limit in relation to specific children.

In considering whether to exempt a person from the usual fostering limit, the local authority must consider:

- The number of children whom the person proposes to foster;
- The arrangements which the person proposes for the care and accommodation of the fostered children;

- The intended and likely relationship between the person and the fostered children;
- The period of time for which he/she proposes to foster the children; and
- Whether the welfare of the fostered children (and any other children who are or will be living in the accommodation) will be safeguarded and protected.

What if I want to adopt my foster child or become a Special Guardian?

Adopting a child is very different to fostering. This is about making a forever commitment to the child so this needs to be considered carefully. The most important thing is that the Permanency Plan for the child is adoption. If you would like to be considered as an adopter for the child, you need to inform your Supervising Social Worker who can then pass this on to the relevant parties for further progression.

If the decision is to proceed, an assessment which will focus on the potential of you as a prospective adopter and whether this will be in the long-term interests of the child will be completed. You will receive the same assessment, preparation and training as other prospective adopters.

Special Guardianship or Long-term fostering may be another option.

Special Guardianship addresses the needs of a significant group of children, who need a sense of stability and security but who do not wish to make the absolute legal break with their birth family that is associated with adoption. It also provides an alternative for achieving permanence in families where adoption, for cultural or religious reasons, is not an option. You can apply for a Special Guardianship Order [and an adoption order](#) once the child has lived with you for one year.

Special Guardians have Parental Responsibility for the child and although this is shared with the child's parents, the Special Guardian will have the responsibility for day to day matters without consultation with others. The parents still have to be consulted and their consent is required to the child's change of name, adoption and living abroad. A Special Guardianship Order made in relation to a Child Looked After replaces the Care Order and the Local Authority no longer has Parental Responsibility.

Special Guardians may be supported financially or otherwise by the local authority and, as with adoptive parents; they have the right to request an assessment for support services at any time after the Order is made.