

# Foster carers needed...



## **A guide to becoming a paid foster carer in Darlington**

## **Keeping families together is our goal**

Wherever possible Darlington Borough Council tries to keep children and their families together. However, there are occasions when this is not possible and foster carers are needed to provide a home for children who, for many reasons, are unable to live with their families.

Working in partnership with the council and the children's parents, our foster carers play a vital role in helping achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people and – together we make a difference.

Whenever possible we hope that children would return home to their families and living in foster care would be a temporary arrangement.

## **Why choose to become a foster carer?**

Whilst becoming a foster carer can be challenging, it is also extremely rewarding. Foster carers are all different, but they all have one thing in common and that is wanting to help children who are going through a difficult time in their lives.

If you would like the chance to be a part of a small, committed team and make a real difference to a Darlington child's life then please read on.

## **What does it mean to be a foster carer?**

Foster caring is parenting. Helping children to maintain contact with their brothers and sisters, parents and other family members is an important part of the role.

As one of our foster carers you should be prepared to attend meetings with social workers, teachers and health professionals about the child or children in your care. As an advocate for the children you care for, you will help ensure that the right decisions are made about their care, education and health.

## **How long do our placements last?**

Children in Darlington may need a foster carer for anything from a few days, to several months or even years.

We need foster carers who can welcome children into their home and families, care about them, support them and help them with the feelings of loss, anxiety, confusion and distress that they may experience, however long the stay. As a foster carer with the council you will make a huge difference to a child's life.

## **About you - what we are looking for in a foster carer**

To foster you could have children of your own, or not, you could be married or single, own your own home or rent, you could be in a same sex relationship, working or not.

What's important is that you can offer a safe, stable nurturing home and have the energy, enthusiasm and commitment to give the children in your care all the support, patience and encouragement they need.

We are looking for people with these qualities and we provide training and support to not only prepare you for fostering but throughout your fostering journey.

We do require our foster carers to provide a non-smoking environment and, if wishing to foster children aged 0 – 5, foster carers must be non-smokers.

Criminal convictions would not automatically exclude you from fostering, of course we would not be able to consider anyone who has committed offences against children or young people.

There are no upper age restrictions and we would usually only consider applicants aged over 21.

### **About your home:**

All you would need is a spare room, unless you are wanting to care for a child under the age of two years.

You don't have to live in Darlington, but you do need to be at a distance which is realistic when transporting children to and from school and contact visits.

### **About us: Why registering directly with the council is the best route into fostering**

We are not for profit. That means that we are passionate about providing only the very best match for our foster carers and looked after children. It also means that the council's own foster carers are always our first choice in matching a child to a foster carer.

It is only when we do not have capacity with foster carers recruited directly by the council that we go out to independent fostering agencies.

You are part of our team. All our foster carers and their families are fully supported through the registration process and beyond by our experienced social workers.

We provide ongoing face-to-face and online training opportunities. This ensures that you are not only fully equipped to provide the best care for the children you are looking after but have opportunities to develop your skills and grow, increasing your earning potential.

Our small team includes specialist social workers who are there to give advice and support on a range of issues, including health and education.

Our foster carers are part of our team. When you foster with us you will have access to other foster carers through support groups, social events as well as regular activities for your own children and those you look after.

### **Who are the children?**

Within Darlington there are many children aged 0-17 who need foster placements. Many of our children and young people need foster carers because they have suffered neglect or abuse, and this will have had a huge effect on them.

We are looking for foster carers to meet the needs of:

- Brothers and sisters, to ensure sibling groups can stay together
- Children and young people who are over the age of 11 years

- Children with disabilities, including short break respite care
- Children and young people from black and minority ethnic groups

We provide support and training to our foster carers so that they can understand the impact of neglect and abuse. As one of our carers you will work with us to help the children and young people in your care to deal with their experiences.

## **Types of foster care we are recruiting for**

### **Short-term**

This involves foster carers providing a child with temporary care meaning the child will stay with you for a short time until the child's future plan is finalised. This type of care could involve a few hours a week, a weekend, a week or a few months.

### **Long-term**

Sometimes a child may need to move in with a foster family for a longer period after a decision has been made that they are not able to return to their own families. We need foster carers who can make a long-term commitment and can help by offering a child the chance to grow up in a safe and supportive environment, receiving the appropriate care whenever possible and the opportunity to keep in contact with their birth family, where appropriate.

### **Supported lodgings**

Supported lodgings carers provide young people aged 16+ with a safe place to call home, helping them to develop the skills they need and take their next step towards independent living.

### **Short break**

Short breaks provide invaluable support for children and young people with a disability, and their families. They offer opportunities for children to become more independent, widen their horizons, form new friendships outside their family and to have new experiences. At the same time, their families get a break from caring and a chance to recharge their batteries.

### **Emergency**

Sometimes children may be removed from their parents due to an emergency. It may be that as a foster carer, you are contacted to care for the child at very short notice, usually until a more permanent placement can be identified. You may be contacted any time during the day or night.

## **Payments**

The amount you will earn with us depends on your levels of experience and on the ages and number of children you care for.

All foster carers receive an allowance designed to cover all aspects of the cost of caring for a child. The level of the allowance varies according to the age of the child, up to £246.47 for teenagers who are 16+.

Foster Carers also receive a fee known as a 'professional fee' for each child in their care per week. The amount received, (Band A - £100, Band B - £125 or Band C - £200) depends on

your existing experience, knowledge and skill as a foster carer. The criteria attached to these bands allows carers to progress to the top band C of £200 per week.

A new foster carer, Band A, caring for two siblings aged three and four would for example receive £200 per week in professional fees, plus £285.74 per week in foster care allowance. A total of £485.74 per week.

An experienced foster carer, Band C, caring for a four-year-old and an 11-year-old could expect to receive a total of £745.45 per week in professional fees and allowances.

An additional allowance will also be made for each child prior to Christmas and prior to the school summer holidays. As a foster carer you will not be eligible to claim Child benefit for any child that you care for.

There is a different payment scheme for supported lodgings providers who receive a weekly payment of around £250 per week for providing a home for a young person.

### **What to do now**

If you are ready to take the next step in becoming a foster carer please contact us by telephone: 01325 406222 (Select option 5) or by email: [fostering@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@darlington.gov.uk) including your contact details and the best method and time to contact you.

If you are still thinking about it, why not take a look at our website: [www.darlington.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/fostering) and sign up for one of our information events where you can find out more, meet some of our team and ask questions.





# **Change a child's future. Foster with us.**

**Visit [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk),  
call 01325 406222 and choose option 5  
to find out more or email  
[fostering@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@darlington.gov.uk)**