



# Preparing To Foster

With you every step of the way

**Fosterline**  
**0800 040 7675**  
your fostering advice service

**[www.fosterline.info](http://www.fosterline.info)**







## I'm thinking of fostering, what happens next?

We're thrilled to hear that you're considering becoming a foster carer, Fosterline is here to support you throughout your journey even if/when you become an approved foster carer. Fosterline provides free confidential and impartial advice, information and support to current and prospective foster carers including kinship foster carers living in England.

The next step is to contact local fostering services of your choice who may visit you to conduct an initial assessment before they may then invite you to apply to become a foster carer. Use this guide to help ensure that you are prepared for your initial assessment to foster and to help begin thinking about the full fostering assessment.

## I'm thinking of fostering, what happens next?

All fostering services have a very stringent procedure in place to assess the suitability of a person to become a foster carer. The assessment process itself is in two stages but fostering services will undertake an initial screening before entering the assessment and approval of foster carers in line with current fostering regulations.

The fostering assessment (often referred to as a `Form F` assessment) is detailed and may sometimes feel intrusive. This is due to the nature of the fostering role and the need to ensure vulnerable children are in the care of safe, nurturing adults. The full assessment will usually take an average of 6 months and must be completed within 8 months of the application to foster being made. This guide may help fostering services in their screening process but most importantly may support you to prepare for any assessment process to come.

Please note the assessment process and timescales are different for kinship / connected person/family and friends foster carers who may be coming forward to care for a particular child or children known to them although many of the questions to consider below may be relevant. Please see [\*\*fosterline.info/thinking-of-fostering/what-is-fostering/types-of-fostering/kinship-care\*\*](https://www.fosterline.info/thinking-of-fostering/what-is-fostering/types-of-fostering/kinship-care) for more information or contact Fosterline [\*\*fosterline.info/about-us/contact-us\*\*](https://www.fosterline.info/about-us/contact-us)

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# Checklist to prepare for your initial assessment

The initial assessment/visit will begin to explore your own (including partner if applicable and other household members) circumstances that will lead to a more in-depth exploration and analysis of all aspects of your current and previous lifestyle (within the full assessment/ Form F) if you are invited to make an application.

Please review your own personal situation against the following:

## Section 1. Have you spoken to your family?

When applying to foster and living with a partner it is usually the case that both will be assessed jointly as prospective foster carers. You will need to consider the impact on other family members both within your household and your extended family. It is important that this is a family decision as fostering incorporates teamwork and support by all family members. The whole household will be impacted by sharing the home with a foster child so everybody needs to be on board. Interviews will be conducted with all household family members factoring in their views and references will be sought with your consent from friends, family, significant previous partners and employers.

	Yes	No	N/A
<b>I have spoken to my partner</b>			
<b>I have spoken to my children</b>			
<b>I understand my children living with me or elsewhere (including if they are now adults) will have their views taken into account</b>			
<b>I have spoken to relevant extended family members (parents, siblings etc.)</b>			

If you would like to discuss any of the above with Fosterline in confidence, please contact us: [fosterline.info/about-us/contact-us](http://fosterline.info/about-us/contact-us)

## Section 2. Your personal circumstances

The fostering service will seek checks and references from police, medicals, education and local authority checks etc as part of the screening process to ensure that there are no risks to you or others when placing a vulnerable child or young person in your care. The fostering service will also need to evidence current financial stability. This might include seeing evidence of household income and outgoings etc.

	Yes	No	N/A
<b>Does anyone in your household have a criminal conviction? Are you/they willing to discuss the circumstances with the fostering service? All adult household members (from the age of 18) will be required to have a DBS (police check). A previous conviction is not an automatic barrier to fostering depending on the specified offence and any risks identified. Contact Fosterline in confidence for more information.</b>			
<b>Do you (and/ or your partner if applicable) have a disability, health condition or experience of mental health challenges? Are you/they willing to discuss this with the fostering service? All prospective carers undergo a medical as part of the assessment process. A disability or physical or mental health issue is not an automatic barrier to fostering. Contact Fosterline for more information.</b>			
<b>Do you or anyone in the household smoke? Smoking may impact the age of the children and/or type of fostering that could be undertaken and each fostering service will have their own policy about this.</b>			
<b>Are you and/or your partner employed or self employed or intend to be if approved as a foster carer? Are you/they willing to discuss how this will be managed alongside the fostering role?</b>			
<b>Do you and/or your partner if applicable currently receive welfare benefits? Fosterline can answer queries in confidence around benefit entitlement and fostering</b>			

The areas listed above will be considered carefully by the fostering service. Foster carers come from a diverse range of backgrounds and circumstances it is their ability to safely care for vulnerable children that is key. Please contact Fosterline <https://fosterline.info/about-us/contact-us/> if you wish to discuss any issues or have more questions.

### Section 3. Do you have suitable accommodation?

Your home will be assessed within the local environment and the potential to promote the wellbeing of children and young people ensuring they can thrive and have easy access to community facilities. Most fostering services will expect you to have a spare room and your property will need to be in good repair and meet health and safety requirements. This might involve creating an action plan with changes needed to be made by the prospective carers within an agreed timescale before the assessment process is complete.

In home	Yes	No	N/A
Do you have a spare room?			
Do you have smoke alarms fitted?			
Do you have a carbon monoxide detector?			
Are all rooms clean, warm and well decorated?			
Does your furniture and glazing conform to safety standards?			
Are potential risks accounted for both inside and outside the property? For example, are medicines and cleaning materials locked away, knives stored securely and do greenhouses contain safety glass?			
Are stairs safe banisters fitted or a maximum gap of four inches between balustrades?			
Are all windows safe including window locks and safety glass where needed?			
Are all rooms hygienic?			
<b>Garden and surrounding area</b>			
Is the garden perimeter secure?			
Is any play equipment well maintained?			
Are any ponds, sandpits, trampolines etc. secure, covered or fenced off?			
Are tool sheds, garages and out buildings secure, locked and safe?			
<b>General</b>			
Is alcohol stored safely?			
Are cigarettes, lighters, matches stored safely and out of harms reach?			

<b>Do you have a fire escape plan for exiting the home?</b>			
<b>Do you have any pets or domestic animals and are they well cared for and child friendly?</b>			
<b>Do you have vaccination records for pets where applicable?</b>			

If you answered no to any of the above, don't worry as you will usually have plenty of time to address these in agreement with the fostering service. Please contact Fosterline for further information.

## Section 4. Personality and relationships with others

Fostering relies heavily on communication and with this will come different views and interpretations of situations. You will need to be able to demonstrate that you are capable of communicating with professionals, children and birth families and understand what is expected of you in different meetings and environments.

	Yes	No	N/A
<b>Are you organised with good communication skills and able to work within a team?</b>			
<b>Can you promote the views of children and young people within your care?</b>			
<b>Are you able to keep information confidential and protect sensitive information?</b>			
<b>Are you able to recall and discuss your childhood?</b>			
<b>Are you able to discuss any previous significant relationships?</b>			
<b>Are you able to discuss your relationship with your own parents and siblings?</b>			
<b>Are you clear on why you want to foster and able to discuss and express this?</b>			
<b>How do you cope with stress and are you able to provide any examples of this?</b>			
<b>Do you have a support network that you can rely on? (It is preferable to have a small number of available committed supporters who can step in when you are unavailable).</b>			

## Section 5. Valuing diversity

Some groups of people experience unfair treatment and discrimination on the basis of who they are because of the colour of their skin, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability, gender or age. Treating everyone fairly does not mean treating everyone the same, there will be additional support required based on the individual needs of every child you look after. A foster carer is an advocate for the children they look after.

	Yes	No	N/A
<b>Are you non-judgmental with an accepting attitude?</b>			
<b>Could you support a child's religious beliefs and heritage?</b>			
<b>Are you able to challenge prejudice, racism and discrimination?</b>			
<b>Are you able to discuss both yours and others' sexuality positively?</b>			
<b>Are you able to promote the needs of others experiencing a disability?</b>			
<b>Will you be able to interact professionally with birth parents?</b>			

## Being open and honest

Remember to be open and honest with both the fostering service and with yourself, being engaging and transparent will aid a successful assessment. Anything that was chosen to be hidden or undisclosed is likely to come to light at a later stage and would more than likely work against any future or current approval. Being open will also help the fostering service identify what support you may need to be a foster carer.

Nobody has the right to be a foster carer but just because you may not fit the criteria and requirements of one fostering service doesn't mean you would not fit the requirements and needs of another fostering service. This is because fostering services may be looking for different types of foster carers, have policies in place for example in relation to a minimum age or age of the other children in your household and/or view your circumstances differently.



## Are you ready for assessment?

If you feel you are prepared for the assessment having considered the issues above you may wish to contact local fostering services. You can add your postcode here to find a list [fosterline.info/thinking-of-fostering/find-a-fostering-service](https://www.fosterline.info/thinking-of-fostering/find-a-fostering-service). It may be helpful to contact more than one initially including those based within local councils, to see what training, support and financial support they offer and what type of foster carers they are recruiting. This may help you decide which service best suits your requirements.

You can only be assessed and approved by one fostering service. Fosterline is unable to recommend a particular fostering service as it's an impartial advice service, but it can help prospective carers in identifying factors to consider when selecting a fostering service. You can check the current inspection rating of a fostering service by going to the Ofsted website at [reports.ofsted.gov.uk/search?q=&level\\_1\\_types=3](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/search?q=&level_1_types=3)

Fostering services hold regular informal recruitment events as a chance for prospective carers to find out more about what they offer. Recruitment events are normally listed on their websites and may also be listed at: [fosterline.info/thinking-of-fostering/events](https://www.fosterline.info/thinking-of-fostering/events)

### Stay in touch with Fosterline

If you have any concerns and queries about the assessment process or any other issue surrounding fostering then please contact us for help and advice via our Freephone helpline on **0800 040 7675** available Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) 9.00am to 5.00pm. You can also e-mail us at **[enquiries@fosterline.info](mailto:enquiries@fosterline.info)**, or send us a live chat at **[fosterline.info](https://www.fosterline.info)**.

You can keep up to date with fostering news by following us on Facebook (**[facebook.com/fosterline](https://facebook.com/fosterline)**) and X (**[x.com/fosterlinegov](https://x.com/fosterlinegov)**).

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