



Preparing To Foster

With you every step of the way

Fosterline
0800 040 7675
your fostering advice service

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 when you are an approved carer. Fosterline provides free confidential and impartial advice, information and support to current and prospective foster carers living in England. Use this guide to help ensure that you are prepared for your initial assessment to foster.

Fostering services assessment process

All fostering services have a very stringent and complex 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 the Children Act 1989 volume 4.

Due to the very nature of the fostering assessment (often referred to as a `Form F` assessment) it is lengthy and can be quite intrusive. The expectation is that this assessment would take between six to eight months to complete but we hope this guide will help you to understand what you can put in place before the assessment begins. We hope this will help fostering services in their screening process and support you to prepare for the assessment to come.

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Checklist to prepare for your initial assessment

If you are offered a fostering assessment (often referred to as a 'Form F') this will involve an in-depth exploration and analysis of all aspects of your current and previous lifestyle. Please review your own personal situation against the following expectations:

Section 1. Have you spoken to your family?

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 team work and support by all family members. The whole family 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 sought from friends, family, previous partners and employers.

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

Section 2. Your personal details

The fostering service will seek checks and references from police, medicals, education and local authority checks 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.

	Yes	No	N/A
Do you or any of your family have a criminal conviction?			
Do you suffer from ill health or have a known medical condition?			
Have you ever suffered from a mental illness?			

	Yes	No	N/A
Do you have a disability?			
Do you currently work or intend to work if you are approved as a foster carer?			
Do you currently receive welfare benefits?			

If you answered yes to any of the above, then this doesn't automatically preclude you from being assessed to become a foster carer. Please contact Fosterline for further information.

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 adhere to health and safety requirements.

	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 conform to British Safety Standards and well presented?			
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 fireguards in place and heating appliances fixed to the wall?			

	Yes	No	N/A
Are stairs safe banisters filled or a maximum gap of four inches between balustrades?			
Are all windows safe?			
Are all rooms hygienic?			
Garden and surrounding area			
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?			
General			
Is alcohol stored safely?			
Are cigarettes, lighters, matches stored safety and out of harms reach?			
Do you have a fire escape plan for exiting the home?			
Do you have any pets or domestic animals and are they well cared for and child friendly?			
Do you have vaccination records for pets where applicable?			

If you answered no to any of the above, don't worry as you will have plenty of time to address these and doesn't automatically preclude you from being assessed to become a foster carer. 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 you are capable of communicating with professionals, children and birth families and understanding what is expected of you in different meetings and environments.

	Yes	No	N/A
Are you organised with good communication skills and able to work within a team?			
Can you act as an advocate for children and young people within your care?			
Are you able to keep information confidential and protect sensitive information?			
Are you able to recall and discuss your childhood?			
Are you able to discuss your previous significant relationships?			
Are you able to discuss your relationship with parents and siblings?			
Are you clear on your motivation to foster and able to discuss and express this?			
Do you have stress coping mechanisms and are you able to demonstrate these?			
Do you have a solid support network that you can rely on? <i>It is preferable to have a small number of available committed supporters who can step in</i>			

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 or disability. 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
Are you non-judgemental with an accepting attitude?			

	Yes	No	N/A
Could you support a child's religious beliefs and heritage?			
Are you able to challenge prejudice, racism and discrimination?			
Are you able to discuss both yours and others sexuality positively?			
Are you able to welcome and support children and young people of different heritage and background to your own into your household and promote their welfare?			
Are you able to promote the needs of others experiencing a disability?			
Will you be able to interact professionally with birth parents?			

Being open and honest

Remember to be open and honest with both yourself and the fostering service, 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.

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.

Are you ready for assessment?

If you have predominately answered yes to all the questions in sections 1,2,4,5 of the checklist, you may be ready to be assessed to become a foster carer. To find a fostering service local to you, visit www.fosterline.info/find-a-fostering-service/. Here you can simply enter your town or postcode to find a list of local authorities and independent fostering agencies near to where you live.

Fosterline is unable to recommend a fostering service, as Fosterline is an impartial advice and support service, however, once you have identified a fostering service in your local area you can check their inspection rating by going to the Ofsted website at: www.reports.ofsted.

[gov.uk/](https://www.gov.uk/) and entering their name. Fostering services regularly hold foster carer recruitment events which you may want to go along to; visit www.fosterline.info/recruitment-events/ to see a list of 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 0800 040 7675 available Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm. Alternatively you can e-mail us at: enquiries@fosterline.info or arrange for us to call you at a time that suits; to make an appointment visit: www.fosterline.info/make-an-appointment.

You can keep up-to-date with fostering news by liking us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/fosterline) and following us on Twitter (www.twitter.com/fosterlinegov) #BeAmazingTogether #OneMoreHome

We wish you well with any fostering assessment you undertake and hope you will join us as a Friend of Fosterline supporting and using the service in the future.

With you every
step of the way

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