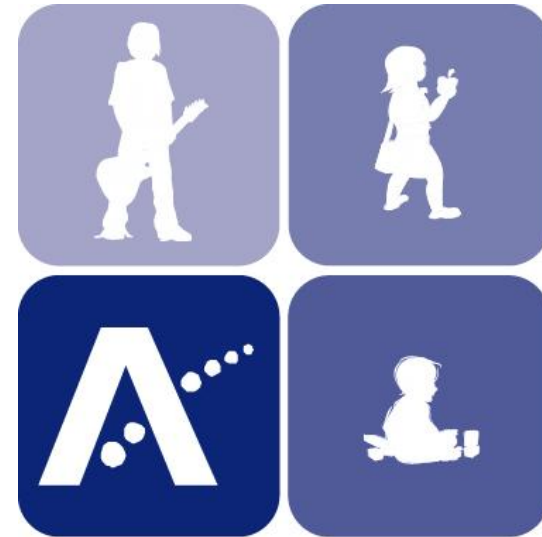


Thinking about Fostering?



Aberdeenshire Council
Family Placement Service

Where can I get more information?

When you return your Registration of Interest Form to us, we will make arrangements for you to meet with a Family Placement Worker.

Please contact:

Family Placement Service
93 High Street
Inverurie AB51 3AB
Tel 01467 625555

Representation and Complaints

Whilst it is Aberdeenshire Council's intention to provide a good service, if you have any issues regarding representation or a complaint, please ask for the leaflet "Have Your Say: Compliments, Comments, and Complaints". This leaflet is available from all Social Work offices.

As Aberdeenshire Council is regulated by the Care Commission, you may also complain to :

The Care Commission
Johnstone House
Rose Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1UD
Tel 01224 793870

What is Foster Care?

Aberdeenshire Council Social Work provides services to help families care for their children at home. However, sometimes for a variety of reasons, this is not possible and at any one time there are a number of children, ranging from babies to teenagers, who need to be looked after away from home. There can be many reasons for this. Sometimes there are problems at home and breakdowns in family relationships. Some children may be neglected or abused in other ways or there may have been a sudden family crisis such as an illness and there are no other relatives available to help out.

Some Foster Carers feel best suited to looking after a child at short notice when there is a crisis situation. Others prefer to offer care for a few days or weeks, while some prefer to care for a child for a few months or even years. The length of time a child stays with Foster Carers often depends on how soon the child can return to their family. Foster Carers are also needed to offer regular weekend and/or holiday care.

Aberdeenshire Council's Fostering Service provides four categories of approval.

Temporary Care

Temporary Foster Carers look after children and young people for periods lasting from one day to a number of months; the average is somewhere in between. Children may move back to their birth families, but if this is not possible, plans will be made for them to move from their temporary Foster Carers to more permanent placements.

Permanent Care

Some children need a permanent Foster Carer when all attempts to return them to their birth parents have not worked. Permanent foster care provides planned placements for children for a number of years, until they are able to live independently. This allows a child to grow up in a safe and supported family environment whilst generally having some contact with their birth family. Children who need this type of care are usually school age up to teenagers.

Respite Care

Respite Foster Carers look after children for a few days, perhaps over a weekend or evenings to support the child's family or Foster Carers. Some families caring for children with disabilities welcome the opportunity for their child to be cared for in a safe and caring environment. It also gives the child a chance to make new friends and broaden their horizons.

Emergency Foster Carers

When a child needs to be accommodated outwith office hours their care is provided by an emergency Foster Carer. Generally these will be families with experience of caring for children. The child remains with the emergency Foster Carer for up to 3 days.

Social Work aims to help children return to their family wherever it is possible.

Aberdeenshire Council Fostering Scheme

Aberdeenshire's Fostering Scheme has been introduced to deliver a high quality fostering service that will provide good outcomes for children who have been fostered. It gives Foster Carers the chance to recognise the skills that they have.

What happens next

The Home Study report will be presented to Aberdeenshire Council's Fostering Panel. You will be invited to attend part of the Panel to discuss your application. The Family Placement Worker involved in your preparation and assessment will discuss the role of the Panel in more detail with you. The Panel's recommendation is passed to the Head of Social Work (Child Care and Criminal Justice) who will make a decision about your approval within 14 days.

If you are approved as a Foster Carer, Social Work will hold details in your records. If you withdraw your application or your approval has been withdrawn, details of your records will be held securely and confidentially for a period of 10 years.

Following approval, you will be required to follow Aberdeenshire's guidance. 'The Guidance for Foster Carers and Social Workers' produced by Aberdeenshire Council, will be made available to you.

To improve your understanding of fostering and to develop your skills, training opportunities will be provided. Support Groups take place regularly where you will meet experienced Foster Carers who will also provide support and guidance.

What happens if I wish to proceed?

Having completed and returned the 'Registration of Interest Form' a Family Placement Worker will contact you within two weeks and arrange to visit and discuss the preparation and assessment process that all prospective Foster Carers undertake.

You can be confident that the initial visit and the subsequent assessment will be carried out by a qualified Social Worker who has experience of childcare, foster care and family placement work.

Social Work has clear policies and procedures to assess and approve Foster Carers.

Prior to the assessment being started you will be asked to attend a 'Skills to Foster' training course. Following this the assessment of your suitability to become a Foster Carer will commence, a Home Study report completed in partnership with you and all members of your family. We aim to complete this in six months.

The assessment and approval process will involve all members of the household, including children and young people.

Social Work is required to make all necessary checks, including criminal record checks to determine your suitability and these checks are repeated every two years.

A medical check is requested to ensure that you are fit and well enough to care for children and this is repeated every 3 years. You will also be asked to provide the names of referees who can comment on your suitability to care for children.

The Scheme has 4 Skills Levels that reflect the experience, training and skills of the Foster Carer. The assessment to become a Foster Carer uses a Competency based approach which identifies the potential Foster Carer's skills and those skills which can be further developed.

All new Foster Carers will be placed at Level 1 of the Scheme. They then have the opportunity to progress through each of the 4 levels, when they complete competencies and core training modules. On reaching Level 4 Foster Carers will provide a specialised service.

Fostering is a rewarding and challenging undertaking, which includes a range of different caring tasks. Completing competencies and training can help to build confidence and ensure that you have the knowledge and skills to make a positive difference to the children and young people in our care.

Social Work aims to help children return to their family as soon as possible. Sometimes it will not be possible for a child to live with their family again and they will remain in need of care until they can live independently.

Who are Foster Carers?

Foster Carers are ordinary people and, like the children they care for, come from a variety of backgrounds. They may be young couples, older experienced parents or single people. They may be working or unemployed. They may be living in rented accommodation or own their own homes. What they have in common is room in their lives and homes for children that need their care.

Foster Carers are needed throughout the Aberdeenshire area, in rural areas and in towns. Social Work are very keen to find families from all communities, religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, who can care for children who need to be fostered.

What qualities do Foster Carers need?

Foster Carers need to be warm, patient, understanding, flexible and able to care for children safely. A sense of humour is essential. In addition Foster Carers are required to have the ability to promote the health, education and personal and social development of any child or young person in their care.

What do Foster Carers do?

- Provide a good standard of care for other people's children.
- Have an understanding of the difficulties parents face and be able to work closely with children's families and others who are important to the child.
- Work as part of a team with Social Work as another professional. Confidentiality must be respected at all times.
- Attend meetings and contribute towards making plans for the care of the child.
- Be motivated to develop new skills, undertake competencies and attend training.

What support do Foster Carers receive?

Following approval as a Foster Carer you will be supervised and supported by a qualified Social Worker from the Family Placement Team in your local area. They will visit in line with requirements and offer advice and be available to support you in relation to any problems you may encounter with the fostering task. A telephone helpline is available to all Foster Carers outwith office hours to provide support and advice.

Your Family Placement Worker will support you with your learning and development and will ensure that you have every opportunity to develop a range of knowledge and skills, which will support you with the fostering task.

Any child placed with you will also have a Social Worker, whose role is to work with parents and Foster Carers in planning for the child, and who has overall responsibility for the child. The child's Social Worker will also make visits to your home.

How are Foster Carers paid?

Payments to Foster Carers are divided into two categories as follows:

Fostering Allowances

There are remuneration and reimbursement payments. They are paid to cover the daily costs of caring for a child or young person and other costs you may incur in meeting the care needs of the child.

Skills Payment

This payment is paid to Foster Carers in recognition of the knowledge and skills they bring to their role as a Foster Carer and in the quality of care and support they give to children and young people. The Skills Payment depends on the level at which you are placed.