



Information About Fostering



Clackmannanshire
Council

www.clacksweb.org.uk



Our vision

To improve outcomes for some of our most vulnerable children.

We will do this by increasing the number of foster carers in the area and provide additional training to make sure that as many children as possible can be looked after successfully by local foster carers.

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Introduction

Clackmannanshire Council welcomes your enquiry about becoming a foster carer. Fostering is a life changing process, therefore we would encourage you to carefully consider all the information that we have included in this pack.

There are several ways to foster and these are outlined in this booklet and this should help you decide what type of fostering is best suited to you and your family.

Clackmannanshire Council’s experienced staff are happy to offer any information, help and support to enable you to take the next step.

Foster carers need to provide children and young people with a safe, secure, stable and stimulating environment. Creating this environment requires the involvement of each individual within any foster family, their family network and external supports. Foster carers must be able to promote the welfare of a foster child by displaying an inclusive attitude towards working with a foster child’s own family, with the Social Services and other services involved with the child.

Looking after vulnerable and sometimes confused children and young people is not the easiest thing in the world. The needs are great, the rewards are greater. Knowing that you are making a difference to a young life is very fulfilling. That’s what keeps our carers dedicated to fostering, some for as long as 28 years.





Clackmannanshire Needs Foster Carers

Although Clackmannanshire is one of the smallest local authorities in Scotland, there is a high rate of deprivation compared to other parts of the country as well as a high prevalence of alcohol and drug misuse.

Currently in Clackmannanshire there are 65 children accommodated away from home.

The main reasons for this are:

Lack of parental care

Parental alcohol or drug misuse

Child protection issues

We require foster families for children of all ages, from a range of backgrounds and with varying needs. A priority for Clackmannanshire Council is to keep siblings together where possible and we particularly welcome applications from people who are interested in fostering sibling groups.

We recognise our particular responsibility to our looked after children and young people, and we will support and care for them as they grow up and take their first steps towards independence and self-reliance.

Criteria for applicants

- Applicants must be over 21 years old
- Applicants must have a spare room
- Single applicants as well as couples are welcomed
- Couples do not need to be married or in a civil partnership but they must have lived together for a minimum of 2 years
- Applicants do not have to be employed
- Applicants do not need to own their own home
- All applicants will be subject to Local Authority, health, employment and PVG checks
- Clackmannanshire Council wants to provide a smoke-free environment for all our looked after young people to promote a healthy living environment

There is always a demand for our services, which means we are always ready to welcome new carers. You will be assessed on your ability to promote the health, education, personal and social development of the children and young people, provide a safe and caring environment, work as part of a team and be committed to your personal growth and professional development.



Testimonial

“ We both spoke about fostering when we got married in 2001. We were aged 23 and 25. At that point we felt we were too young and wouldn't be considered but we were wrong. We did wait a few years and applied in 2005 as we felt we had lots of good qualities to offer e.g. time, commitment, energy, love, patience and understanding.

We went through a 6 month process before we were accepted as short break carers initially. We were excited and nervous at the same time. During our first placement we soon overcame our anxieties. We were short break carers for a year but we both felt we could offer much more so applied to be full-time carers and have been for over 10 years.

We have cared for just over 40 children and young people. We have come so far in our journey and gained so much experience through day-to-day care and the ongoing training that we attend through the Council's Fostering Team.

Over the years we have supported the children and young people but also their parents and siblings. Some of us just need the time, empathy, trust and support to become the positive role-models that children want and need.

Throughout our journey we have had many highs and some lows but every minute and day has been so worthwhile. Every child that has come into our lives has experienced change even in a small way. We have dealt with all sort of issues but gradually the barriers are broken down and the child begins to trust, thrive and flourish which helps him or her achieve in all areas of life.

Foster carers in Clackmannanshire

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Types of Fostering

There are a range of ways to offer support to accommodated children through fostering and our experienced team will be more than happy to work with you to explore the best option for you and your family.

Options are:

Emergency fostering

Emergency carers look after children of all ages where there has been a crisis or unplanned event and there is an immediate concern for safety. This type of placement can last no longer than 12 weeks.

Interim/Long Term Fostering

These carers look after children of all ages who can no longer remain in the care of their families for a variety of reasons. When children are placed in this type of care it may be due to a crisis at home or due to ongoing family issues which are difficult to resolve.

At the point of accommodation it will be a priority for his/her social worker to work with the child and family to rehabilitate the child back to it's family. This may take several weeks, months or potentially years. In other cases rehabilitation may not be possible and alternative life long care for children will need to be explored.

During the period of accommodation the foster carer will be required to provide the child with a secure, stable and nurturing home environment in which their physical and emotional needs will be met. This means that carers must work in partnership with health, education, social services and other agencies to ensure the best possible outcomes for children. The foster carer will also be required to support the child to attend contact with their birth families and/or other siblings so that an assessment of parental ability can be undertaken.

Foster carers work as part of a care team and as such will be required to attend a variety of meetings and appointments. We ask that at least one carer gives up work so that they can meet the demands which come with fostering. It is essential that carers are flexible and can make themselves available to attend these meetings and are able to act as an advocate for a child's needs and wishes where the child is unable to do so.

Foster carers do a vital job in caring for some of Clackmannanshire's most vulnerable children through periods of difficulty and upset in their lives. They offer children a home until they can be rehabilitated back to their families or alternative life long carers. Carers will tell you that the hardest part of this job is having to say goodbye to children. However you will have the satisfaction of helping a child through a difficult period and either being reunited safely to their families or other life long carers.

Permanent Fostering

Permanent carers look after children from all ages and backgrounds who have been accommodated and a decision has already been made that they will not be returning to the care of their families.

Carers in this category are committing to look after children throughout their lives until the point where they can move onto independence. The children and carers will continue to receive support from social services and the carers have a lot more input regarding decisions about the child's care plan.

Similar to interim care, permanent foster carers are expected to work in partnership with health, education and other agencies to ensure the best outcome for children. This may include supporting children to remain in contact with birth families and/or siblings if this is deemed appropriate.

There will be a careful matching process between children and carers in this category as it is anticipated that this will be the child's permanent family. Permanent carers provide a stable home for Clackmannanshire's most vulnerable children, enabling them to flourish as they grow towards independence.

Short Break Fostering

Short Break carers offer children, birth families and foster families a break during times of crisis or during holiday periods. In some instances it is not possible for foster families to take children on holiday; for example if they don't have parental permission or obtaining a passport is an issue. In these circumstances a short break carer looks after foster children for a short period.

Supported Carers

Supported carers offer support and accommodation to young people over the age of 16 who have previously been looked after by social services and who are now getting ready to make the transition towards living independently.

These carers will provide a safe and secure environment where young people can learn a variety of skills which they will need throughout adulthood. These skills include cooking; cleaning, budgeting as well as more complex tasks like developing social skills and relationships. The carers will guide and assist the young person to develop their confidence, interests and skills and to gradually reach their potential towards living independently.

Supported carers do not work in isolation. They are part of a network of people and professionals that work together to ensure the young person's needs are met. The carers will attend meetings when required so that their opinion and experiences are shared with the wider care team and considered. Supported carers are also expected to work within the care plan so that the best outcome for a young person is attained.

Supported carers provide a vital and valuable service, helping to equip young people with the skills and knowledge which enable them to live safely and independently throughout their adult lives.

Questions and Answers

Do I need specific qualifications to foster?

No. When you are preparing to foster you will receive training to help you and your family identify and build upon the skills you already have, and develop new skills needed to foster, through the 'Skills to Foster' course. Once approved foster carers will have access to, and will be expected to undertake relevant ongoing professional learning and development.

Do foster carers get paid?

All foster carers get paid allowances to ensure that they can provide adequately for a child's day to day needs.

Clackmannanshire Council pays its carers a fee as well as an allowance which varies according to a Skills Level scheme which the service operates. Our team will be happy to provide further information about this.

As Clackmannanshire Council is a placing agency our carers have less time between placements than other agencies. In our experience, whilst this cannot be guaranteed, this means our carers are more likely to have children placed with them on a regular/ongoing basis. Our team is based here in Clackmannanshire and are able to provide regular support often face-to-face at exactly the time it is needed.

I smoke. Can I be a foster carer?

Clackmannanshire Council has a legal duty to safeguard the health and welfare of all the children in its care. Lifestyle factors such as diet and smoking are important because unhealthy eating habits and passive smoking are potentially damaging to the health of children. Clackmannanshire Council wants to provide a smoke free environment for all children and there would be an expectation that you would work with the service to undergo a smoking cessation programme if you smoke at present. If you are applying to look after children under 2 years old then we would expect you to be a non-smoker.

What support do foster carers receive?

All foster carers will be allocated their own supervising social worker who will guide them through the process and offer support and formal supervision through regular visits.

Clackmannanshire Council has a small but dedicated team of workers who are experienced in supporting people through all stages of the fostering journey. We are locally based and can provide face-to-face support when needed.

Foster carers are part of a wider team of professionals working for the best interests of a child and support can be drawn from this network.

Foster carers will be given support and training across all aspects of the fostering role and can progress through the Skills Level Scheme once approved. Ongoing training will be provided throughout a foster carer's career with the council.

How will fostering affect my children?

Fostering involves the whole family and will affect your children. The children of foster carers play a key role in the fostering household and should be included at all stages of the fostering process. It can be tough for children who find themselves sharing their parents with children who have led very different lives. However, many children also say that they have enjoyed their parents' fostering and learnt a lot from it.

Foster carers say it is important you continue to make time for your own children and ensure that they still feel they are special to you. Research suggests that it is preferable to have a reasonable age gap – either way – between your children and those you foster.

What happens next

If after reading this booklet you want to take things further please call us on 01259 225085 and speak to our duty worker.

Together with other prospective carers you will be invited to an information event where social workers and current foster carers will help you make up your mind about whether or not you want to go ahead in the process.

The flow chart on page 13 shows the steps to being approved as a foster carer.

Do you need more information?

If you would like more information on any of the areas mentioned in this booklet please do not hesitate to contact the Fostering Team on 01259 225085.

Testimonial

“ Having worked full time for 28 years, I felt that I was no longer enjoying my work the way I used to and needed something different in my life. I felt I could make a difference in a young person's/child's life. I felt that short break caring would best suit me as it still offered me the flexibility to continue my career on a part time basis, and also allowed me to dip my toe in the water to see if foster caring was for me. I'm so glad I did!

Over the last year and a half, I have been a short break carer with Clackmannanshire Council and have looked after 15 young people/children ranging in ages from 6 months to teenage boys and girls. I find foster caring to be such a rewarding job; I thoroughly enjoy the company of young people and receiving positive feedback from them in the form of a cuddle or asking to come and stay again gives me an overwhelming sense of achievement. Fostering has enriched my life and makes me feel good knowing I have helped in a positive way. It is the most rewarding thing I have ever done.

The ongoing support and development opportunities have increased my knowledge and awareness of child development, attachment, challenging behaviours, trauma etc and I am thriving on being able to put my learning into practice. I am also allocated a dedicated supervising social worker who is on hand to provide me with the support and assistance I require, no matter how small or how big. I also have access to this support and assistance out-with office hours from the Emergency Duty Team so I never feel that I am alone.

Short-break carer, Clackmannanshire

“ I think the rules are fair and we always have healthy food and the pocket money, I get every weekend, I always get about £5.

Young person in foster care



The Assessment Process

Enquiry Stage

Telephone us on 01259 225085 or complete the online form at our website www.clacksweb.org.uk or email us at fosteradopt@clacks.gov.uk and we will contact you to discuss your enquiry.

Home Visits

One of our experienced Supervising Social Workers will visit you at home to find out more about you, your family and what you could offer a child or young person. They will want to know if your home is suitable, for example if you have enough space and a spare room. They will consider whether you have the skills and qualities necessary for fostering. It's also an opportunity to provide you with more information and for you to ask some more in-depth questions about fostering.

Information Event

We will invite you to an Information Event. Here you will meet experienced carers and members of the Fostering Team with whom you will be working over the months to come. They will tell you about the children who need fostering and the kind of care and attention they need. You will also be able to ask about the ups and downs of fostering and get answers from the people who are actually undertaking the role.

You will complete the consent, disclosure and health forms so that this information can be obtained before you embark on the preparatory course.

'Skills to Foster' Preparatory Group

You will be invited to attend our preparatory course 'Skills to Foster'. The course has seven modules that will be conducted over a combination of evening and/or weekend sessions. The purpose of the course is to provide you with knowledge about the professional fostering role as well as some of the practical skills and abilities you will need to start your new career in fostering. Agreement is reached about progressing to the Formal Application Stage.

Formal Application Stage

Assessment Report

This is the most in-depth component of the process as it can take up to six months from you signing the application form to being presented at the Fostering Panel. The assessment is very detailed as we have to be sure that you can offer a safe and caring home to a child or young person. You will have the opportunity to find out more about the rewards and reality of fostering and to think about whether you really want to become a carer. The assessing social worker will visit you a number of times to talk in detail about the qualities you will need and for you to undertake some homework and demonstrate your skills and experience. He or she may also want to talk to your wider family and any other people who are important to your support network. Together we will work out how many children you could foster and what ages. In doing this personal assessment your assessing social worker will build up a detailed picture of your strengths and abilities, your home life, your relationships and support network, and the commitment you could give to a child. Finally, the assessing social worker brings all this information together into a report on your potential as a foster carer. You will have the opportunity to read the report and add your own comments.

Fostering and Adoption Panel

The last stage in the approval process is when the assessing Social Worker presents their assessment to the Fostering Panel, along with any other relevant information that may assist the Panel in making a decision. You will also be invited to attend. The Panel is chaired by an independent person with a background in childcare and fostering. It is their job to consider all the information, to talk to you and your assessing Social Worker, then to decide whether to recommend you for approval to the Council's Head of Service who then makes the final decision.

Agency Decision Maker

The Head of Service will make the decision as to whether or not to accept the Fostering and Adoption Panel's recommendations. The Head of Service will write to you within 14 days to advise you of their decision.

Placement

A child or children will be placed with you following various matching and linking meetings, which you will be involved with.



The Process



If you would like to make a suggestion, comment or complaint about social work services please do so in writing to:

Clackmannanshire Council Social Work Services
Kilncraigs, Greenside Street,
Alloa, FK10 1EB
or phone 01259 225000

Alternatively you can make a complaint to the Care Commission about the quality of service provided by a registered care service or about the Care Commission. Please refer the matter to:

The Care Inspectorate
Compass House,
11 Riverside Drive,
Dundee,
DD1 4NY
or phone 01382 207100

If we are unable to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, you will then have the right to refer the matter to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman by writing to:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
4 Melville Street,
Edinburgh,
EH3 7NS
or phone 0870 011 5378

You must do this within 12 months of first being notified of the matter you are complaining about.

Fostering and Adoption Team
Clackmannanshire Council,
Social Services,
Kilncraigs, Greenside Street,
Alloa, FK10 1EB.
Phone: 01259 225000 or visit www.clacksweb.org.uk





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