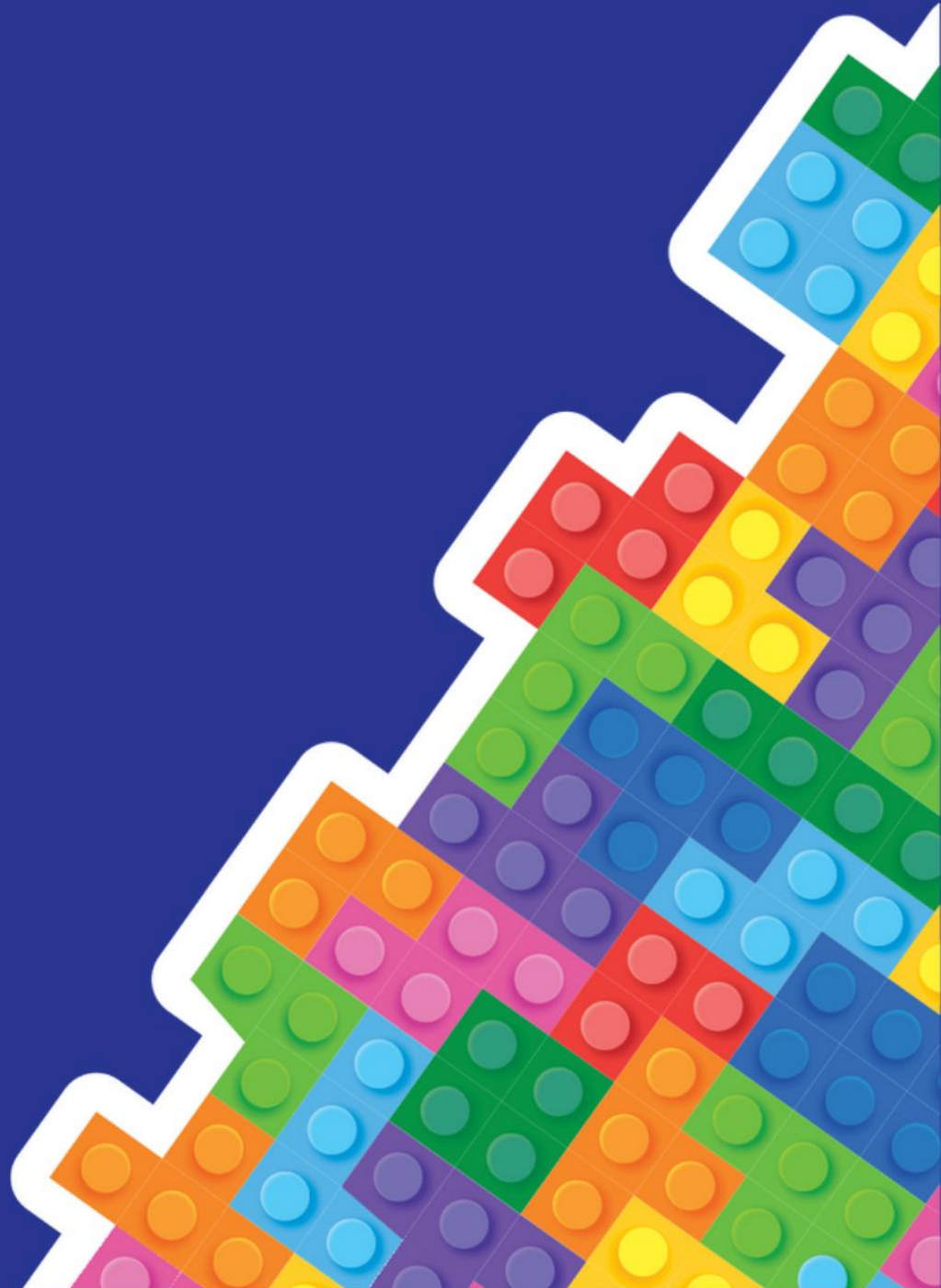




Buckinghamshire  
Council

# A Guide to Foster with Bucks

**FOSTER**  
with  
**BUCKS**





We have over 500 looked after children in Buckinghamshire and we believe the best place for them to thrive is within a family environment. It's great that you're considering becoming a part of our fostering community in Buckinghamshire and helping to change a child's life.

Foster carers provide a critical role in building a nurturing environment to develop, support and guide children in care. Becoming a foster carer is an important decision that will impact yourself, your family and your friends. We are committed to supporting you at every stage of your fostering journey – from your initial enquiry, throughout the assessment process and throughout your time as a foster carer.

We treat all prospective foster carers with respect and honesty, ensuring that the assessment process is as fair and transparent as possible.

This information pack details the application process and the support you will receive once approved as a foster carer. We hope that you will find it helpful and informative.

If you have any queries about the information contained in the pack or require more detailed information at any stage, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Email: [fostering@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

Freephone: 01296 674973




**Messages from Children placed with Buckinghamshire Council Foster Carers:**

*“It was strange at first, being part of a big family, nothing like my own - but the foster carers’ own children have accepted us as part of the family which makes things much easier for us. I am relieved that I have been placed with my younger brother as we have been together through everything.”*

*“I didn’t know I was intelligent. No one ever told me or expected anything of me until I moved to my foster carers.”*

*“If we have problems, our carers listen to what we have to say. There is nothing to be afraid of here, it’s safe.”*

*“It’s scary when you first arrive. On the first night, I was really nervous, but then I got used to the family and now I think it’s really great. We are all totally accepted as part of the family, including grandma and grandad. That’s particularly nice as I’ve never had a grandad before.”*



**Our foster carers have told us they had worries before applying to foster. Here are some of the concerns we often hear and the support we have in place to help:**

**1. What is the impact on our own children?**

*“We have had incredible support from the Fostering team and our children have taken to fostering so well. We all are on this journey together.”*

Buckinghamshire has dedicated Child and Family Workers who are available to support and work with our foster carers’ own children of all ages. This might be to support them to understand when children move away or to understand reasons for children in care behaving in a certain way. We recognise the role of children of foster carers and value the contributions they make to children in their parents' care.


**Sons and Daughters Group**

To support your own children, we have an established Sons and Daughters support group in place during school holidays. This group is available to children 5 - 18 years old and is a fantastic opportunity to participate in fun activities and meet others with similar experiences.

*What children and young people say about the Sons and Daughters Group....*

*“The Sons and Daughters Group is just one of the many perks to fostering. We have attended many of the days out and have thoroughly enjoyed every one of them. My sister’s favourite activities have been horse riding, spy missions and making pizzas at Pizza Hut. The Sons and Daughters groups are a great opportunity to make new friendships with people whose parents foster care. You find that you have so much in common with these people and can relate to them greatly. Both my sister and I highly recommend attending these group activities for these very reasons”.*

*“I have been attending Sons and Daughters Group for quite a lot of years since my parents started fostering. Over the years I have participated in activities including rock climbing, canoeing, archery, biking and many more. It’s given me the chance to meet other young people whose parents foster so we have a lot in common. I enjoy seeing these people regularly and making new friends. I would*



*recommend any young people whose parents foster to go to sons and daughters because it's such an amazing experience and you get so many life skills from the things you do".*

*"I really love coming to the activities with you. I always have fun and can't wait for the next one. I have made some nice friends there too".*

## **2. Can I have input in making the decision about the child moving in with us?**

Yes - you will receive a child's profile before they move in with you. The information provided will vary depending on the level of involvement a child may have had with Children's Services before they were separated from their parents. This profile enables you, along with the support from the Fostering Service to match a child to your family.

## **3. What is my commitment if I become a foster carer?**

In addition to day-to-day family life, there will be meetings which you are required to attend. These will, where possible, be arranged to suit your availability. These meetings will focus on the specific needs of a child living with you and identify if further support is required. You will be asked to support children to see their families, including siblings who may be living elsewhere. There may be additional meetings to discuss education or the child's living arrangement with you. All Foster carers complete records on behalf of children. These will be saved on the children's file as part of their life story. You will be offered ongoing support and guidance to explain the processes.


## **4. Can I leave a foster child with a family member overnight?**

Yes, although we would advise that a child lives with you for a while before you arrange for a family member to look after them and that we complete a couple of basic checks, such as a DBS, we always keep the child's social worker informed. The fostering service will speak with you to ensure you have provided details for a specifically named family member in case of an emergency.

## **5. Will I receive support?**

Caring for children is hugely rewarding, however, we understand that this can be a demanding role. We have fantastic range of social and financial support in place to help you provide a high standard of care.

Once you completed your fostering assessment and when you are approved as a foster carer, then



the fostering service will allocate a named fostering social worker to you. They will work alongside your assessing social worker for your first year as an approved foster carer to ensure you have a high level of support. They will arrange fostering supervision visits and will be available to talk through any queries or problems you might have. The Local Authority has an out-of-hours telephone number which will be available in case of an emergency.

We have support groups for new and existing carers at different times and locations, including online and in the evening.

Buckinghamshire Council is also proud to be part of the Mockingbird initiative, with two constellations. Mockingbird provides additional support for foster carers, along with creating a wider support network. For more information about Mockingbird, please visit [www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk](http://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk).

*“When you talk with other foster carers, the barriers come down. Everyone is so supportive and encouraging of everyone. It’s nice to build those connections and be part of the ‘fostering family’”.*

## **6. Can I take children abroad?**

Yes, we always encourage foster carers to have children join in family holidays, it is always essential to make sure a child has a passport before booking a holiday. We always request any such plans to be made several months in advance of any holiday because those who hold parental responsibility will need to give consent for the journey. Once you receive consent, we will provide you with a letter which you can share with immigration to ensure they understand a child is travelling with you.


## **7. Can children participate in all activities or are there any restrictions?**

We encourage foster carers to include children in their regular interests, experiences and activities. If there are any health concerns, then we will follow advice from our health colleagues.

## **8. Do children always stay at the same school?**

We endeavour to keep our children in the same school, children spend a lot of time at school and value the friendships they create. Only in exceptional circumstances will a child be required to change schools.

## **9. Will I only look after children who share my ethnicity?**



Our children in care come from all different ethnicities. We make every effort for a child to experience a family home which might feel 'familiar' to them. Sometimes, this is not possible, so we provide our foster carers with training and support to look after children and promote their ethnicity.

**10. What happens if a child hurts someone in my family?**

Sadly, this does happen, although not very often and never intentionally. Children's feelings can cause them to show hurtful behaviours to others. Children who experience trauma in their lives can, at times, dysregulate. We work with our foster carers to develop de-escalation skills and to access support from the service. Where possible, we work with foster carers to ensure children remain living in their care, however, there are times when this is not possible because the risk is too high and we will make every effort to move a child in a planned way, sadly this might not always be possible.

Your allocated social worker will be available to offer advice and guidance, alongside our out of hours support team.

**11. Are all children from the local area?**

Yes, if you choose to become a foster carer for Buckinghamshire Council then we will only approach you with children who live in Buckinghamshire. Our goal is to keep children in their local area, to enjoy their local school and to have those with parental responsibility close by.



## **Who can foster?**

We recognise the wealth of skills and life experience a diverse community can bring to a child's development and growth. In Buckinghamshire, we encourage applications from a wide range of people to meet the varying needs of our children.

We are committed to recruiting carers from diverse racial, cultural and religious backgrounds. People do not need to be married to become a foster family – they can be single, divorced or cohabiting. We welcome enquiries from the LGBTQ+ community.

### **Age**

Applicants wishing to care for children under the age of 12 must be aged 21 or over. To care for teenagers, an applicant must be at least 25 years old. However, there is no upper age limit. It is expected that carers are healthy and mature enough to support the complex needs that some children may have.

### **Being married or in a partnership, or single**

If you are in a partnership, either through marriage, civil partnership or a stable living arrangement, you can foster.

People of all sexual orientations and genders can foster. You will need to demonstrate that your partnership is stable, permanent and will be able to withstand the challenges that fostering can bring.

Single people can also foster. This arrangement can be seen as a positive choice for some children. As with people in partnerships, applicants will need to show that they have strong and supportive network of family and friends to call on when they need to. Single applicants will need to consider suitable arrangements, should they become ill or unable to look after the child in their care.



## Previous partnerships

If you have children with a previous partner, all your children (including adult children) will need to be interviewed (the age and ability of your children will be taken in consideration) as part of the fostering assessment process and we will also discuss with you your ongoing involvement in their lives. The purpose of the interview is making sure the family, as a whole, has a good understanding of fostering and, if children have any questions about fostering, then this is a good time to ask them.

As part of this process, we contact all relevant previous partners whenever applicants have parented together, or:

- you have been involved in a previous partnership regarded as of significance, i.e. which lasted for over a year and/or was a live-in arrangement, whether the care of children was included or not.
- you have children with a previous partner or have cared for children within a previous partnership

The previous partner will be asked if they are aware of any cause for concern, about each applicant caring for a child or whether they have known them to be violent, abusive or negative. It is appreciated that this is a sensitive matter which may raise issues of concern, but we are interested in establishing applicants' ability to parent. We understand that some relationships do not end amicably and will take this into consideration.

An applicant's outright refusal for us to contact ex-partners may have an impact on whether we can progress or not with your application. Please discuss concerns with us as early as possible if this affects you or causes you anxiety. However, in all but the most exceptional circumstances we will expect to speak to ex-partners.

## Accommodation

It is essential to have a spare bedroom to accommodate a foster child. If you live in rented accommodation, we are required to check your tenancy agreement and have a letter from the landlord showing that they are supportive of the tenants' fostering.



## **Experience with Children**

Experience of childcare is essential whether it is gained through having children of your own, work or voluntary settings. Life experiences and personal qualities can also enhance the care provided.

## **Health**

You will need to be in good health and be able to manage the physical and emotional demands of caring for children. As part of your assessment, you will be asked to complete a GP medical which the Local Authority will pay for. A specific disability or medical condition will not necessarily prevent you from fostering.

## **Smoking**

Where someone in the household smokes cigarettes or e-cigarettes we would not place children under the age of 5 years.

## **Employment**

Foster carers need to be available to care for children to meet their needs, including taking them to school if necessary, attending meetings and other appointments as necessary. Carers also need to be available during school holidays to care for a foster child.

Having a job does not necessarily prevent people from being considered for fostering. Applications from those who work from home, are self-employed or have flexible working arrangements will also be considered. There are various foster care schemes that may be suitable for applicants' circumstances. An increasing number of employers are becoming "Fostering Friendly", including Buckinghamshire Council, which means that they provide extra leave for employees who are becoming foster carers. The Fostering Network provide more information about this scheme on their website:

<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/championing-fostering/fostering-friendly>



## **Individual circumstances**

During the assessment process, there may be circumstances specific to you that, when considered, lead to us advising you this is not the right time to proceed. For example, if you have recently experienced a significant loss or life change, we might advise taking time to adjust before pursuing the assessment. We will endeavour to be transparent in our communication, within the bounds of other people's confidentiality.



## **Information about the children**

Children's Services work collaboratively to ensure that children, where possible, can remain in the care of their own family. It is only once efforts to keep children secure in the families have failed that the Local Authority would intervene.

Most of the children in foster care have left their families in difficult circumstances and the courts will have sometimes been involved, making the decision that they cannot safely return to the care of their own families.

Reasons for children moving to foster care might include:


- Parental misuse of drugs and/or alcohol
- Domestic abuse
- Mental Health difficulties
- Criminality
- Neglectful parenting.

These factors are likely to have impacted on a child's emotional, social and behavioural development and may well have long term implications for their future development. Some children continue to lack trust in adults and experience difficulties in forming and maintaining lasting close attachments to their new carers.

Some of the children will have developed greater resilience to these difficulties than others, there are a variety of reasons for this.

## **Providing foster care to children**

Buckinghamshire Council Fostering Service must adhere with Fostering Regulations and the National Minimum standards expected from foster carers.



We work collectively with our foster carers to ensure that all the children who come into our care can be assured a high standard of foster care.

As a foster carer you will therefore need to:

- Provide clean, safe and comfortable accommodation.
- Support and promote children's education.
- Provide a nurturing home environment which promotes health and general development.
- Protect children from abuse.
- Promote the development of independence and skills, appropriate to the child's age.
- Set appropriate boundaries and manage children's behaviour effectively.
- Listen to children, empower them and advocate on their behalf as necessary.
- Have good communication skills, and an ability to work as part of a team.
- Keep good quality records which could be used in court, in respect of children placed with you and to contribute to the planning for their future.
- Participate in supervision meetings, ongoing mandatory and supplementary training, and other relevant meetings concerning the foster child.
- Work within our diversity policy and promote equality in respect of disability, sexual orientation, religion and culture.
- Encourage children in maintaining contact with their family, where appropriate.



## Therapeutic foster care for specialist placements

Some children need a little extra support to thrive in a family environment. Specialist or therapeutic foster placements are designed for children who may be ready to move on from residential care or who would benefit from the stability and nurturing of a therapeutic family setting.

### Children may benefit from therapeutic foster care if they have:

- Experienced significant trauma.
- Been subjected to abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- Been involved in, or diverted from, the youth justice system.
- Spent time in hospital or been detained under the Mental Health Act.
- Found it difficult to settle in residential homes or standard fostering placements.

Therapeutic foster carers provide high-level, trauma-informed care for children and young people aged 5 to 18 years old with complex behavioural, emotional or additional needs.

When you look after specialist placements you will receive enhanced financial allowances, as well as enhanced support to reflect the focused advanced care you will need to provide the child or young person including:

- Tailored 24/7 support, guidance and regular supervision from a dedicated network of professionals to make sure you feel secure as a therapeutic foster carer and provide the focused support to meet the needs of children you look after.
- Bespoke ongoing training to give you the tools to provide the advanced care needed to improve children's wellbeing, build relationships and boundaries, and approach behaviour regulation in a trauma-informed way.
- Access to a specialist team of clinical psychologists and therapists working with you and the child you look after with an advanced care plan providing assessments, crisis intervention and tailored intensive support.



## The fostering assessment process

1. Once you have decided you wish to proceed, contact us by phone, email or via the Buckinghamshire Council website to complete an enquiry. We will check whether you have the basic requirement of a spare room and that you are available to meet with us for an initial visit.
2. The initial visit will be a chance us to share more about fostering with you and for a joint decision to be reached whether a full assessment is appropriate. A member of staff from the Fostering Service will visit your home and discuss your circumstances in more detail.
3. Following an initial visit, a Fostering Manager will read the short report and if they are in agreement the assessment is positive, then you will be sent an application form and an invitation to our Skills to Foster Training course (more details on this can be found below). The Fostering service will speak with you in further detail if there is any identified reason not to proceed with a full assessment.
4. Once we receive your completed application form, you will be allocated an assessing social worker, and your detailed assessment will commence. This assessment process can last between 4 – 8 months. You will need to commit to a minimum of 8 visits with your social worker, setting aside 2 hours per visit. The assessment as a two-way process and we endeavour to provide you with as many learning opportunities as possible. Therefore, we do set homework tasks, such as case studies and further reading. Your assessing social worker will be dedicated to getting to know you and bringing out those skills and qualities which you will bring to fostering.
5. The format of the detailed assessment is used by all fostering agencies and the depth of the assessment is to ensure the fostering service understand your family (beneficial for future matching with children) and that you and your family remain confident in your decision to foster children. We include a template of the full assessment that is written by the assessing social worker, for you to have an idea of the areas which will be discussed.
6. You will receive a copy of your assessment and this assessment is presented to a Fostering Panel.



7. The Fostering Panel meets monthly and is usually made up of people from Children's Services, Health, Education, a foster carer from another Local Authority and a person who has been fostered. You are invited to attend the Fostering Panel Meeting. They will make a recommendation whether they agree for you to be approved as a foster carer, based on your assessment and any other relevant information. This recommendation is shared with the Agency Decision Maker in Children's Services. This is a senior manager within the department and they ratify the recommendation from Fostering Panel. Only upon receipt of agreement from the Agency Decision Maker (within 10 working days following the fostering panel) can the fostering service be able to place children with you.
  
8. Once you have been approved, your assessing social worker will remain involved until your first Household Review Panel, which is 12 months after you were first approved. You will be introduced to a fostering social worker, who will support you with children moving to your family home.

### **Statutory checks and references**

The fostering service must obtain statutory information from several different agencies such as the Police, Health, family references and personal references.

These include:

- (a) Disclosure and Barring Service (Police checks 'DBS') which will be completed with all of your household members who are over the age of 16.

As fostering involves the direct care of children, you will be subject to an enhanced DBS check. This will show any previous convictions, so please always share any information with us (even if you consider the conviction or involvement with the Police happened when you were younger and should not be on your form) at the earliest opportunity to build an open, honest, and trusting relationship.



A person cannot be considered suitable to foster if they have been convicted or cautioned for a “specified offence”. A “specified offence” is an offence against a child, or an offence concerning rape and other matters relating to sexual activity or an offence concerning pornography.

If you do have information on your DBS, then your assessing social worker will complete a risk assessment with you and this report will be signed off by a senior manager called a Head of Service. We are only permitted to disclose any specific reasons for this decision to the person who has the conviction or caution.

Failure to disclose previous cautions, concerns or convictions will likely result in the Fostering Service declining to progress your application any further.

If you have lived overseas for any period as an adult, Police or Good Conduct Checks may be required from the Country of Residence; you will be advised if this applies.

Please raise any questions you may have about these requirements.

(b) Medical report (Adult Health Check)

A full medical assessment from your General Practitioner is required. The medical report is sent to our Medical Adviser, who provides written advice to us. A summary of the advice is available to the GP and prospective foster carers. Additional information may be sought or advice about health issues provided. The medical report is produced at our expense.

(c) References

Three personal references are required from each applicant, one must be a family member and the others should be from someone who is not related to you. They must be different referees for each person.

At least one of them should have known you for 5 years, and all more than 2 years. It is useful for your assessment to provide referees who have known you across different stages in your lives and



where possible to include those who are within easy travelling distance of where you live. The information they give will be reviewed and analysed to help us consider what potential support may be available to you in the future.

The assessing social worker will choose which three or more referees to visit and ask them to produce a further written report. References remain confidential but can be discussed with you if the referee gives their consent. If concerns are raised from references, these will be considered and discussed with the applicants.

We reserve the right to request references from other individuals in your support network/families, where the information gathered could assist in compiling a full picture of your circumstances.

(d) Employment references

These will be sought to verify information provided and views will be asked for, if your work or voluntary work involves children. You should inform us if you have not yet informed your employer.

(e) Local Authority checks

These will be made in respect of the Local Authority in whose area you live or have lived in the last 10 years.

(f) Health Visitor/Nursery/School

If there are already children in your family, then checks will be made with the relevant services concerning their Education, to assist your assessing social worker in gaining a picture of them and your family.

(g) Armed Forces



SSAFA (the Armed Forces Support Charity) will be contacted regarding applicants who are serving or who have served in the Armed Forces. Information will be requested on the permanent nature of your postings, employment or home circumstances if you are a member of the armed forces, in order to assist us in planning for children.



## Skills to Foster Training

Skills to Foster introduces new foster carers to the world of fostering, giving them the knowledge and skills they need to get started.

Children are at the heart of this important training course. Key topics include:

- Identity
- Positive approaches to challenging behaviour
- Dealing with new technologies such as social media
- Safer caring - these practices are intended to safeguard a child whilst protecting foster carers, their immediate and wider family and friends.

The training and preparation of new foster carers through *Skills to Foster* is essential for the future wellbeing of vulnerable children in the care system. Whether foster carers are caring for new-born babies or adolescents, caring for children short term or long term, they need the best possible foundation of knowledge and skills. Foster carers can then build on this foundation throughout their fostering career, as they enjoy the rewards and face the challenges of caring for children with a wide range of needs.

## Course Structure

The training course consists of six sessions for prospective foster carers, all of which are essential. As all the members of the family are involved in foster care there is a separate session for sons and daughters of prospective foster carers. The *Skills to Foster* course is run alongside the assessment of prospective foster carers.

The sessions are held one day a week over a period of three consecutive weeks. They are informal, relaxed days with a mixture of small/large group work, and presentations, including videos. It gives applicants the opportunity to meet others and share their thoughts and views. We encourage experienced foster carers to co-deliver *Skills to Foster* and sharing their own experiences of the fostering role is of great benefit.

Feedback from former delegates has always been positive and they find it essential in their learning as prospective foster carers.



## Therapeutic care training

You will be given expert-led therapeutic parenting training following the PACE approach meaning:

- **Playfulness:** Creating a light-hearted, relaxed environment where they can thrive.
- **Acceptance:** Awareness of thoughts, feelings and behaviours without judgement.
- **Curiosity:** Having an open mind to build connection and trust.
- **Empathy:** Providing a space of compassion and understanding.

This bespoke training will enable you to take on specialist placements if you are available to be matched with children and young people with more complex needs who need a higher-level of care, nurturing and stability.

Ongoing training will be tailored for you and the child in your care to give you the tools to provide the advanced care needed to improve children's wellbeing, build relationships and boundaries, and approach behaviour regulation in a trauma-informed way.



## **Support for our Foster Carers**

We know to be a great foster carer, you need support too. We're dedicated to ensuring you have all the support you need to give the best care possible to our children.

### **Fostering Social Worker**

The fostering social worker supports and supervises approved foster carers. You are allocated a named worker who will visit at least once every 6 weeks, more if needed.

### **Allowances**

We pay allowances to cover the costs of caring for a child placed with foster carers. The allowance will depend on the age of the child and any additional needs the child may have.

Additional allowances are paid for the child's birthdays, holiday and religious festivals. Other expenses may be payable to ensure carers are compensated for the full costs of caring for a child on behalf of the Council.

### **Income Tax and Benefits**

Foster carers are considered to be self-employed and they receive generous tax allowances on income solely derived from fostering. Fostering allowances are paid whether a carer is receiving state benefits or not.

You can receive more specific information on taxation from the Inland Revenue to consider your personal circumstance further. ([www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk](http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk)) Alternatively, contact The Fostering Network on 0207 261 1884.

### **National Insurance contributions**

Since April 2003, foster carers have also been entitled to Home Responsibility Protection which is a way to make sure that you do not get less Basic Retirement Pension due to being a foster carer.

### **Training**

Foster carers are expected to complete 6 mandatory training sessions and to complete a Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) portfolio within your first year of fostering. This is all in place to support you with your ongoing development as a foster carer.



There is supplementary training presented to a high level to our carers to assist in caring for children, some of whom may be exhibiting difficult and challenging behaviour. Buckinghamshire Council has a strong commitment to providing a number of training opportunities each year. Carers are included to attend training along with social workers and our local CAMHS provide training to our foster carers which is valuable for looking after our Buckinghamshire children.

“I think the training that Bucks do is Brilliant. We’ve had children who've been in difficult circumstances and behaviours which reflect this. Part of the training at Bucks helps you to make that differentiation. This is not personal - this is a reaction to what they've experienced, and once you've clarified that and you understand that, you can help them. You can start to help children unpack how they're feeling, get closer and help them to navigate these feelings.”



## Perks for our foster carers

We value and care for our foster carers and recognise the amazing work they do. As well as financial allowances, we also offer a unique perks and benefits package worth over £13,000.

- **Attractions and days out:** Merlin Platinum Annual Pass, theatre tickets, Bucks Museum annual pass and free events at Buckinghamshire Country Parks.
- **Council tax refund:** Full refund of previous year's council tax if you are approved and foster for 182 days in a financial year.
- **National Trust:** Our foster families can get free group general admission (up to 2 adults plus up to 4 children) when visiting the National Trusts' Stowe Gardens, Claydon House, Hughenden and West Wycombe Park locations.
- **Holiday allowance:** Additional financial allowances for each child looked after to help with the costs of going on holiday.
- **Waste and eco-friendly:** Larger bins, annual garden waste subscription, bulky waste collections, a free compost bin and vouchers for sustainable products.
- **Blue Light Card:** Giving you access to over 15,000 discounts to save in retailers, restaurants and much more.
- **Gym membership:** Free memberships at participating leisure centres in Buckinghamshire.
- **Transport and travel:** Family & Friends railcards giving 1/3 off tickets when travelling with a child, free travel on Carousel buses, free parking in Buckinghamshire Council-owned carparks and country parks.
- **Home safety checks:** We are working to offer payments of up to £150 towards home safety checks including gas safety checks to keep our foster families' homes safe and efficient.

More information about accessing our perks can be found in the terms & conditions on our website.



## Benefits of fostering for Buckinghamshire Council:

- You will be considered for placements first as an in house foster carer
- You will have a Fostering social worker who knows Buckinghamshire Children's Service and who can access information directly from the Children's Social Worker
- Fostering expenses are paid
- Excellent training courses
- Joint learning sessions, Support Groups, including Sons and Daughters group
- Emergency support
- Paid subscription to Fostering Network
- Being able to become a member of Mockingbird
- Essential Equipment is provided
- Max Card for fostering families. This is a discount card for foster families and families to obtain free or discounted admission to different attractions
- Two weeks paid respite for long term placements
- Annual Dinner and Awards Evening
- If you are Buckinghamshire Council employee, it is possible to take a maximum of 10 days' paid foster leave in the first 12 month period if you are a newly assessed foster carer. Thereafter you will be entitled to 5 days' paid leave in the following 12-month period (pro rata for part time employees).



## How to progress your application and prepare for the assessment

- Complete the readiness checker: <https://fostering.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/>
- Email us: [fostering@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) or call us: 01296 674973 to have a personalised discussion about fostering and your individual circumstances.
- Book an initial visit with us to determine whether the time and situation is right for you to have a full fostering assessment
- Increase your experience in caring for children other than your own e.g. volunteer in scout groups, nurseries, youth groups, Sure Start, baby clinics at the GP surgery, schools and libraries. (Volunteering will require you to have your DBS is returned, unless you have one already)

### Additional resources to consider:

Coram BAAF website <https://corambaaf.org.uk/>

The Fostering Network has a range of useful advice, support and resources about fostering: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/>

### Points to Consider

Caring for children can be demanding and we need to be confident that becoming a foster carer is right for you, your family and any children that we might place with you.

### You might ask yourself:

Do I want to care for children from another family?

Do I enjoy spending time with children, and can I see small changes to remain positive about them?

How will fostering impact on my family?

How will I manage if a child or young person reject the care I provide them?

Am I comfortable look after children who might show behaviour which is tricky to manage?



Does my extended family support my decision, and will they be available when I need a helping hand?

Can I remain enthusiastic even when things feel difficult?

**We look forward to hearing from you!**



## How to complain, compliment or comment

In the event that you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the service you have received, please do let us know as soon as possible so that we can work with you to try to resolve the difficulty.

Please raise this in the first instance with your Assessing Social Worker or Assistant Team Manager.

Buckinghamshire Council has a complaints process that you are entitled to use. The address below is also the contact for compliments and comments, if you prefer that they go to someone other than the worker involved.

Compliments & Complaints Team

Buckinghamshire Council

County Hall

Aylesbury

Buckinghamshire

HP20 1UA

Tel: 01296 387844

Email: [complimentsandcomplaints@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:complimentsandcomplaints@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

Web: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/contact-and-complaints/>

### For further information please contact:

Fostering Recruitment Team

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

County Hall

Walton Street

Aylesbury

HP20 1UA

Tel: 01296 674973

Email: [fostering@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)