

# Fostering in Aberdeenshire

## WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

The Promise, which was published in February 2020, outlines Scotland's ambition for all children and young people to grow up feeling safe, loved and respected. Where children cannot remain with their families, the Promise states *"the focus of their care must be on building childhoods that are underpinned by loving relationships, fun, play, education and opportunity."*

Foster care provides children with stability when they cannot live with their birth families, offering them a chance to thrive in a therapeutic environment. Aberdeenshire Council's Fostering Service supports individuals and families who want to make a meaningful impact. Whether you can provide a short-term or life-long commitment, fostering is an opportunity to change lives - both the child's and your own.

**Aberdeenshire Council's Fostering Service offers four categories of approval for Foster Carers:**

- **Interim and Long-term**
- **Short Break**
- **Permanent**
- **Emergency**

Foster Carers play a crucial role in providing stability for children during uncertain times.

The goal is to reunite children with their birth families whenever possible. Foster Carers play a key role in this process, working closely with parents and extended family to support assessments and planning.

Where it is not possible for children to return to a parent's care, or to family members, long-term or permanent fostering aims to provide children with stability, continuity, and the security of a nurturing home. Continuing Care gives young people who have been looked after in foster care the right to remain with their Foster Carers beyond their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, up to the age of 21.



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## TYPES OF FOSTER CARE

### Interim and Long-term Foster Care

**Interim Foster Carers** support babies, children, and young people for periods ranging from a single day to several months, up to a maximum of 24 months whilst assessments are completed to assess whether they can live with parents or other family members. This involves working in partnership with parents, families, Social Work, Health and Education professionals.

For children who cannot return home or move to stay with family or friends (kinship care), **Long-term Foster Carers** offer a stable, loving family environment that can last for years, supporting them throughout childhood until they are ready to live independently.

### Short Break Foster Care

If you're thinking about fostering, providing short break stays can be a good way to begin your fostering journey. **Short Break Foster Carers** look after children for a few days, perhaps over a weekend or during holiday periods to support the child's family or Foster Carers. This can be a one-off stay, or a regular, planned arrangement.

### Permanent Foster Care

Often if a child or young person is unable to return to live with their family, their Foster Carers may express a wish to be assessed as **Permanent Foster Carers** for the child.

Permanent Foster Care offers stability and security for the child throughout their childhood, and into adulthood legally secured via a court order. Many children and young people in permanent foster care will have ongoing relationships and contact with their family members, including siblings.

### Emergency Foster Care

**Emergency Foster Carers** can be asked to take children or young people into their home at short notice, outwith office hours, during an evening or at the weekend. For many children accommodated on an emergency basis, there will be immediate concerns for their safety and wellbeing.

Emergency Foster Carers will generally have some experience of fostering.

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## ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE

Aberdeenshire Council's Fostering Service aims to provide high quality foster care for children and young people who are valued, supported, and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals.

To achieve this aim the service recruits, assesses, trains, and approves Foster Carers and delivers ongoing support to them, in order to give them the skills and confidence they need to develop meaningful relationships with the children and young people they care for. The Service also gives Foster Carers the chance to recognise the skills that they have and to receive a payment based on their previous experience, knowledge and skills.

The Skills Scheme has 3 levels. All newly approved Foster Carers will be placed at Level 1. As you gain experience and develop your learning and show you have appropriate skills, you will have the opportunity to progress through these skills levels.

**Fostering transforms lives, it provides children and young people with stability, care, and a sense of belonging. It offers Fostering families the opportunity to make a lasting difference, helping children grow, heal, and thrive in a nurturing environment.**

## WHAT DO FOSTER CARERS DO?

Foster Carers need to be warm, patient, understanding and non-judgemental. They need to be able to provide love, consistency and a nurturing and therapeutic approach to children and young people.

During the preapproval training, and the assessment process, prospective Foster Carers will be supported to develop an understanding of trauma informed care and therapeutic parenting.

Foster Carers are a key part of the team around the child or young person; they are required to attend multi-agency meetings for the child, and complete written reports and records.

Foster Carers play an important part in supporting children and young people to maintain relationships and connections with those important to them, this includes parents, siblings, friends and their local community. The Promise states: *Sometimes, it's not possible for children to live with their family. But they must still be able to live with their brothers and sisters, as long as it's safe.*

Where it is not possible for brothers and sisters to live together, Foster Carers should support them to see and spend time with one another. Maintaining sibling connections can provide invaluable emotional support and continuity for children, fostering a sense of belonging and shared experiences.





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## SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

**The Fostering Service is here to support you on your fostering journey. However, it is important that you also have a good support network of family and friends, who you can bring along the journey with you and who can support you in your fostering.**



The Aberdeenshire Council Fostering Service recognises the importance of high quality support for Foster Carers and their families. Each fostering household has an allocated Supervising Social Worker who provides them with regular support and supervision. In addition to this, our fostering households receive support from the service's dedicated Family Support Workers.

Your Fostering Social Worker will visit you at home every 4 weeks and offer support and guidance in your fostering role. They will ensure that you have opportunities to increase your knowledge, experience and skills as a Foster Carer. Each child or young person in your care will also have an allocated Social Worker, whose role it is to work alongside parents and Foster Carers in planning for the child. The child's Social Worker will visit your home and spend time with the child.

Foster Carers are required to undertake a minimum of 25 hours of learning and development per year and complete core training courses regularly including Child Protection, Trauma Informed Practice, Confidentiality, Recording and First Aid. The Service offers a range of face-to-face and online learning and development opportunities.

## FOSTER CARER SUPPORT GROUPS

Foster Carer Support Groups are organised and facilitated by our dedicated team of Family Support Workers. Support Groups provide the opportunity to meet other Foster Carers, to share experiences, engage in learning and support one another. One of our Fostering Social Workers also facilitates our Men in Foster Care Support Group which is held face-to-face on a quarterly basis.

## FOSTERING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Family Support Workers also organise and facilitate a number of fostering events aimed at everyone within the fostering household over the year – activities have included a Halloween party, Christmas Party, an Easter Egg Hunt and a trip to the zoo.

The Family Support Workers provide support to Foster Carers and their families through one-to-one support for the children and young people in their care, and for the children of Foster Carers on an individual basis and through the Children of Foster Carers activity sessions.



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**The Fostering Service has a range of other supports available to our Foster Carers and their families and we work closely with colleagues to offer opportunities for support and development.**

## THERAPEUTIC PARENTING COACH

In April 2025, the Fostering Service introduced a Therapeutic Parenting Coach, who is one of our approved Foster Carers, Aimie. In her role, Aimie will offer workshops, support groups and one-to-one support to Foster Carers on Therapeutic Parenting.

## THE CHILDREN'S WELLBEING TEAM

The Children's Wellbeing Team provides a community-based service to support children and young people who have an identified need in respect of their mental/emotional wellbeing.

Wellbeing Team Practitioners typically carry out therapeutic 1:1 direct work with care experienced children and young people on a weekly basis, but can also provide support to parents, carers and other professionals.

## FOSTERING NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

**The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity, dedicated to improving foster care for children and young people. It provides support, advice, and training for Foster Carers, fostering services, and professionals involved in the fostering process.**

Aberdeenshire Council is a member organisation, and Aberdeenshire Council pay for their approved Foster Carers to be members of the Fostering Network which provides benefits such as legal protection insurance that covers the whole fostering family, and a legal helpline for expert advice on allegations and help with any legal queries related to fostering.

## COUNSELLING SUPPORT

Foster Carers can access confidential counselling and support services through Vivup, which provides telephone or face-to-face counselling, advice, guidance and online resources.



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## PRE-APPROVAL AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

**NEXT STEPS:** After reading the information pack, take some time to discuss your decision with your family. Their thoughts and feelings matter, and their perspectives will be included in the assessment process. It's also a good idea to speak with friends and extended family members who may offer valuable support once you become a Foster Carer.

If, after these discussions, you're ready to move forward, simply complete the **Registration of Interest form** included in the information pack and return it to us. A fostering worker will be in touch within two weeks to arrange an **Initial Home Visit**.

An Initial Home Visit is an important first step in the fostering assessment process.

It has several key purposes:

**Getting to Know You:** it allows the Fostering Social Worker to learn more about you, your family, and your motivations for fostering. It's an opportunity to discuss your background, childcare experience, and suitability for fostering.

**Assessing Your Home:** the Social Worker will check whether your home environment is safe, welcoming, and suitable for a child or young person. This includes looking at available space, safety measures, and overall living conditions.

**Answering Questions:** It's a chance for you to ask questions, the support available, and what to expect from the process. The visit is meant to be informal and conversational, helping both sides determine if fostering is the right fit.

Following the visit, you may be invited to attend our pre-approval training.

All prospective Foster Carers are required to attend our **3 day pre-approval training**, this may require individuals to arrange leave from their employment and/or arrange childcare. Where you have children living at home, they may be invited to attend a Session for the children of prospective Foster Carers, known as My Family Fosters (MFF).

Following the pre-approval training, you may be invited to apply to proceed to the Assessment stage. Once the application is received, the assessment of your suitability to become a Foster Carer will begin. This involves a Foster Carer Assessment report being completed in partnership with you and all members of your household; the assessment will usually take at least 6 months.

The assessment and approval process will involve all members of the household, including children and young people. We are legally required to undertake statutory checks, including criminal record checks, medical checks, and home health and safety checks. You will also be asked to provide the names of referees who can comment on your suitability to foster.

You will be invited to attend the Aberdeenshire Council Fostering Panel along with your assessing worker to discuss your application and assessment. The Panel members will make a recommendation on your approval to the Agency Decision Maker, who makes the final decision. You will be informed of the decision in writing within 21 days of the Panel.



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**WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM  
YOU....**

**Aberdeenshire Council Fostering Service**

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If you have any questions or need further support, please don't hesitate to get in touch.



[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/children-and-families/fostering/](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/children-and-families/fostering/)



Adoption and Fostering in Aberdeenshire



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