

The  
Fostering  
Network

# Could I foster?

This is your chance to make a  
difference to children in Wales



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We are also grateful for the support of our partners in the Welsh Government, especially Sarah Austin.

### **Maria Boffey**

Head of Operations  
The Fostering Network in Wales

# Foreword

The Welsh Government commissioned The Fostering Network to fill a gap in Wales-specific resources about fostering unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). Wales has done much to welcome refugees and asylum seekers of all ages with strong ministerial support. It has published a [Nation of Sanctuary](#) delivery plan, setting out a range of actions it will take and expects others to take, and has developed a [website of information](#) about rights for refugees and asylum seekers. Within the plan is a commitment to publish resources and deliver training to existing foster carers and those that support them, to encourage them to foster these children and to promote the recruitment of new foster carers, for the same purpose.

Wales is home to a small but fluctuating number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. These young people have left behind war, poverty, destitution, persecution, climate change, terrorism or other threats that cause them to leave their homes. The journeys they have taken to reach the UK are hazardous and often violent and exploitative.

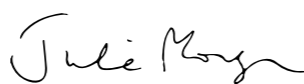
In the last few years, the Welsh Government has provided funding to local authorities to support foster placements, develop social work skills, publish resources and facilitate training. This investment has seen improvements to the capacity of support for these young people,

but we know there is more to do. A major part of the 'more to do' is to increase the pool of foster carers for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

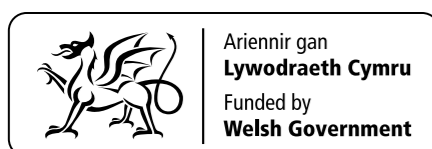
During 2020, we have seen significant numbers of unaccompanied children arrive in the UK via the English Channel, and accommodation, care and support need to be found for them. At the same time, a new National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was developed, and while it is not yet rolled out, it is expected that Wales will need to find more foster homes.

We also want to encourage more people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities to come forward to foster. Children and young people can thrive in any fostering arrangement provided the right matching is made, but we do know that adults that share the same cultural characteristics as the children and young people they foster will likely result in a more successful and stable placement.

We are grateful to The Fostering Network for helping us to build the capacity of foster carers with this work and we hope these resources will encourage carers, existing and new, to support these young people.



**Julie Morgan AS/MS**  
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services



# Welcome

The job of a foster carer is one in which you can make a real difference to the lives of many children, young people and their families.

There is no such thing as a 'typical' foster carer, as every individual brings their own qualities and abilities to the role. As a foster carer myself, I know from experience that there is nothing more satisfying than being able to provide a safe, secure, stable and stimulating environment for some of the most vulnerable children in our society.

Fostering is a varied, demanding and rewarding role and no two days are the same. That's why there are certain qualities that all foster carers need in order to offer children and young people the care they need. Different people bring different attributes, and some people may be particularly suited to certain types of fostering.

If you are thinking of becoming a foster carer, this guide provides an invaluable insight into what you can expect. It outlines the different types of fostering and details the personal qualities that are required for the task, such as enjoying the company of children and young people, having good communications skills and an ability to work as a team. Being flexible, non-judgemental, able to negotiate and compromise are equally important, as is an ability to understand and empathise with both children and their birth families. That said, no one expects

you to know everything about fostering straight away. You will be supported to learn more about fostering and the care system before and after you take up the fostering role.

It's a harsh reality that here in Wales we need hundreds more foster carers – and we need them to be more representative of the population and the unique needs of the children and young people who require foster care today. It's important to match foster children with the right foster carers as early as possible, recognising that particular children, such as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, require special qualities and skills from their foster carers.

**By becoming a foster carer, you can help children to overcome the trauma they have endured, transform children's lives and help them achieve fulfilling and positive futures.**

Read on to find out more!



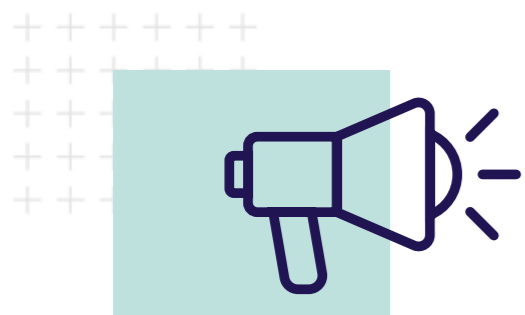
**Colin Turner**  
Director  
The Fostering Network in Wales

## Section 1

# All about fostering

Every year, thousands of children in Wales need foster carers while they can't live with their own families.

Foster carers provide these vulnerable children with a stable home and a supportive, loving family for as long as necessary – sometimes for a few days, sometimes for their whole childhood.



**In Wales, we urgently need hundreds more foster carers.**

In Wales, we urgently need hundreds more foster carers. By widening our pool of foster carers to include more people from all parts of the community, including from all ethnicities and religions, we can ensure that we find the foster carers that are best placed to meet all the needs of children, taking into account their individual health and social needs, culture, lifestyle, language and interests.

Could you be one of them?

**“ A friend who was a social worker encouraged my husband and I to foster. There was a great need for Black/Afro-Caribbean carers and an increasing number of children in the system that they were having difficulty placing in terms of trying to match their needs and respecting cultural diversity. We thought we could help, so we did.**

Veronica, foster carer

**“** Read Veronica's [blog](#) on The Fostering Network's website.



**Children and young people of all ages and from all ethnicities, cultures and religious backgrounds need foster care.**

### Who needs fostering?

Children and young people of all ages and from all ethnicities, cultures and religious backgrounds need foster care. They include babies, teenagers, sibling groups, young parents and their babies, and children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities or learning difficulties. Additionally, foster carers are needed for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. These are children and young people who have travelled without adult members of their family to find safety outside their home country. (You can read more about unaccompanied asylum-seeking children later in this guide.)

The reasons children come into care vary widely and may include a parent's illness or another temporary problem within the family. Many children may have witnessed domestic violence or a parent's depression, or drug or alcohol abuse. Other children may have been abused or neglected. Each child's circumstances and needs are unique.

**“ What motivates me to foster is knowing that I had a loving, solid upbringing and I simply want to return what I received to the children in my care. Fostering will always have challenges, but the rewards far outweigh these.**

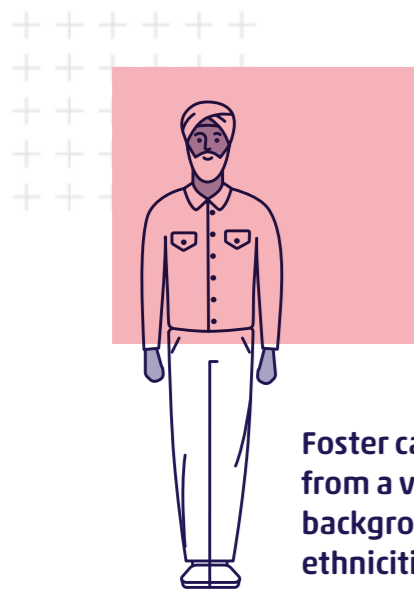
Terry, foster carer

For many children and young people, fostering is their first positive experience of family life – by becoming a foster carer, you could make a huge difference to a child's life.

### What are the different types of fostering?

There are different types of fostering, including short-term and long-term fostering. Additionally, short break carers (sometimes called respite carers) offer part-time care for a child who lives permanently with their own family or other foster carers. And support carers help families to overcome difficulties so that their children don't have to go into care.

Some foster carers in Wales continue to provide care for young people after they have turned 18 under the [When I am Ready](#) scheme. Some over-16s may be offered supported lodgings with families (who aren't foster carers) who help them to take their first steps towards independence.



Foster carers come from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities, and they all have different life experiences, skills and qualities.

### Why is fostering different to adoption?

Fostering is different to adoption because fostering is a way of offering children a home while their own family is unable to look after them.

Fostering can be a temporary care arrangement and many fostered children eventually return to their own families. Foster carers do not have parental responsibility for the children in their care.

Adoption is a legal and permanent way of providing a new family for children who cannot be brought up by their own parents.

### Who can foster?

Foster carers come from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities, and they all have different life experiences, skills and qualities. This diversity among foster carers is important to help meet the needs of all the children who need fostering in Wales. We currently need hundreds more foster carers in Wales.

What is important is that you want to make a difference to the life of a child, and have the relevant skills and experience – as well as being willing to learn more.

**// Your past may be rich and provide you with lots of experiences you can draw on to support children in care. You might be surprised what you have to offer and what a difference you can make in the life of a child.**

Sarah, foster carer



### Why be a foster carer?

Fostering is one of the most varied, challenging and rewarding jobs you can do – foster carers transform children’s lives and play a vital role in Welsh society!

## Section 2

# Could I foster?

Foster carers come from all backgrounds and sections of society and bring a wide range of life experiences.

You will want to engage with children and young people who have often had difficult journeys through their lives. You will have the ability to support them, nurture them, communicate with them, advocate on their behalf and include them as part of your family and community life.

You will be willing to work with the social care team and to work closely with the child’s school. You will be keen to develop your skills and qualities through training, and have the resilience, humour and resourcefulness to stay strong in the face of challenges.

### Most fostering services want their foster carers to meet the following criteria:

- To be at least 21 years old (although, by law, you can apply to foster from 18).
- To have a spare bedroom.
- To be a full-time resident in the UK or have leave to remain.
- To be able to give the time to care for a child or young person, often full-time.
- To have the skills and experience to care for a child, to help them thrive and to keep them safe.



### You will also need to think about:

- What experience do you have of caring for children and young people?
- Is your home life stable, including your relationships with partners and children?
- What other commitments do you have to your own children, hobbies, local community and work?
- Are you fit and healthy enough to foster?
- Are you financially secure?
- Is your home safe for a child or young person?
- How can your friends, family and community support you to foster?
- Do you have previous convictions which might prevent you fostering?



**There are lots of myths about fostering, which means that many people unnecessarily rule themselves out as foster carers.**

## Frequently asked questions about fostering

There are lots of myths about fostering, which means that many people unnecessarily rule themselves out as foster carers. These frequently asked questions and answers will help you discover whether fostering could be right for you and your family.

### Can I foster if I'm single?

You don't have to be married or in a relationship to foster – there are loads of fantastic foster carers who are single. It's important that you have a good support network though.

### Can I foster if I don't own my own home?

Not owning your own home does not prevent you from fostering; many foster carers live in rented accommodation. But you will need to demonstrate that your rental agreement allows you to foster and that the property and location are suitable for fostering a child or young person.

Most fostering services require you to have a spare bedroom to ensure the child you foster has privacy and space, and to help create a safe environment for the whole family.

### Does it matter if I have a criminal record?

A criminal record does not necessarily stop you from becoming a foster carer. The law states that the only criminal convictions that prevent people from fostering are those that relate to an offence against children or a sexual offence. Minor offences should not count against you in your application to foster.

All criminal convictions will need to be disclosed when you apply, and your fostering service will obtain an enhanced check from the [Disclosure and Barring Service](#). Any convictions or cautions will be explored with you by your fostering service.

### Can I foster if I don't have my own children?

You don't have to have your own children to foster. Relevant experience of working with or caring for children is helpful (for example, through work, looking after the children of relatives or friends), and so is an understanding of child development. But a lack of relevant experience is not an automatic bar to fostering – there are lots of opportunities to learn while you're fostering!

### Do I have to have to use computers, the internet and mobile phones?

Yes, it is necessary to have basic information technology skills. A large amount of communication to do with fostering is by emails and text. As a foster carer, you will have to write up some reports and take part in training, and lots of this is now done online.

### Do I have to be well-off to foster?

Fostering services do check financial security of potential foster carers, to ensure that they can provide a stable home for children, but all foster carers receive an allowance to meet the weekly care needs of the children living with them. Many foster carers also receive a fee to recognise their skills and experience. This can vary significantly from one fostering service to another.

### Can I foster if I'm a member of the LGBTQ+ community?

Yes, you can foster. Gender or sexual orientation will not affect your application to foster. What is important is that you can provide a child or young person with a safe, loving and stable home.

### Can I combine fostering with a full-time job?

Foster carers are expected to be available to care for children, and to help children keep in touch with their own family. Foster carers also need to attend meetings, training and support groups.

It may be possible to work part time or full time while you foster, but this will depend on the needs and ages of the children in your care.

Your fostering service may have its own policy about this too. Fostering services would not usually consider it appropriate for fostered children to be in full-time daycare while their foster carer works, but they may consider the use of after-school clubs and other childcare arrangements if they are in the child's best interests.

### Can I foster if I have a disability, if I'm taking medication or I have a long-term illness?

Having a disability does not prevent you from being a foster carer. Fostering services need to ensure that people who apply to become foster carers are physically and psychologically fit enough to care for children and meet their needs. Fostering services require a medical report as part of the assessment process to become a foster carer. However, there is nothing in the fostering regulations or standards that says fostering services should turn down applications from people with any particular illnesses or disabilities, or who are taking certain medications or undergoing medical treatment.

Fostering services must treat applicants fairly, without prejudice, openly and with respect.



**Can I take a child of a different faith to our family's place of worship?**

Yes, if they would like to attend and there are no objections from the child's own family. It's good for children to learn about and experience other cultures and religions. However, you should not try to force a child to join in anything if they are not comfortable with it.

**I leave Wales once a year for two or three months to spend time with family in our country of origin. Can I still foster?**

Yes, you can still foster as long as you are ordinarily resident in the UK. You can discuss this while you are being assessed to become a foster carer, and your fostering service will talk to you about the type of fostering that would best suit your availability.

**Can I foster if I'm vegan?**

Yes, you can, but you must be willing to meet the dietary needs and choices of children in your care and to discuss children's own opinions with them, if appropriate. This is a subject that you can explore with your fostering service during your assessment to become a foster carer.

**Do I have to speak English to be a foster carer?**

Some children in foster care do not have English as their first language and living in a foster home where their first language is spoken can be very beneficial for them - that's why there is a need for more people from diverse backgrounds to consider fostering, including those who speak Welsh.

To be a foster carer, English does not have to be your first language, but the main foster carer in the family will need a good level of spoken and written English to be able to communicate with other professionals, support children's education, advocate on behalf of the child, take part in meetings, make notes and keep records.

If you have any particular communication needs, your fostering service should be willing to discuss this with you.

**We are a religious family. Will this affect our application to foster?**

People from all religions are foster carers, and they help to provide the diversity of foster carers necessary to meet the needs of the children in foster care.

All of the main religions encourage altruism and supporting those in need. For example, the care of orphans or children unable to be cared for by their parents is embedded in Islamic teaching. The prophet Muhammad was fostered during his childhood and, in turn, he cared for other orphans during his lifetime.

In Sikhism the concept of seva (selfless service) encourages Sikhs to help those in need by providing time, energy and money to help the vulnerable. There is also a history of adoption in the Sikh faith, with the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib, adopting many children, including a Muslim child.

**Could our family be asked to foster a child from another religious or cultural background to our own?**

Yes, although your fostering service will discuss with you whether a child from another religious or cultural background could fit into your family life. You will need to think about a range of things, such as the food that you eat, the traditions and customs that you follow, the clothes that you wear and whether you could help a child to follow their own religion, if required.

Some fostering families don't feel that they would be able to meet the needs of children of a different faith or culture to their own. But lots of fostering families enjoy learning about other cultures and religions, and helping their fostered children observe their own rituals, take part in their own festivals and visit their place of worship.

Some fostered children also like to take part in their foster family's religious practice and traditions, and enjoy the sense of belonging that this gives them.

If you care for a child from a different religious or cultural background to your own, your fostering service will offer support, for example, they might be able to connect you with another foster carer as a 'buddy' who shares the child's religion or faith.

**Do I have to be a British citizen to become a foster carer?**

British citizenship is not required to be a foster carer in Wales, but you do need to live permanently in Wales.

**We have a big family and are part of a large network in our community. Would a fostered child be expected to join family and community events?**

Fostered children should be included in your family's social life as much as possible. This is important to help them feel accepted and integrated into family life. You will need to remember that fostered children have a right to confidentiality, so you can't share details about their personal history or background with anyone outside the foster family.

At first, a fostered child may feel shy or overwhelmed, or they may not have the social skills to cope with big groups of people, but foster families provide an ideal environment to help vulnerable children to develop their confidence, personality and social skills.

**Could we take a fostered child abroad with us?**

This will depend upon the fostered child's status and circumstances: the child's own family or the court may need to give permission. Your fostering service can talk to you about this.

For more Frequently Asked Questions about becoming a foster carer, look at The Fostering Network's website [here](#).

Section 3

# Fostering unaccompanied asylum-seeking children



Some foster carers specialise in caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. These are children and young people who have travelled without adult members of their family to find safety outside their home country.

These asylum-seeking children may have experienced persecution for their beliefs, their parents' beliefs or actions, or because of their ethnic or social group. Some may have seen adults they loved murdered, beaten, tortured or raped; others may have had members of their family disappear with no warning or explanation. Some may have come from a country where they would have been forced to fight as a child soldier if they remained.



**Together we must give these children the chance to be children, and foster carers in the UK have a history of supporting children who have sought refuge when escaping war-torn nations.**

Kevin Williams, Chief Executive, The Fostering Network



The most recent data from the Refugee Council shows that most unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are teenage boys from countries including Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Vietnam and Syria.

Foster carers can give these children safe and loving homes, help them to adjust to a new life in Wales and support them as they grow into adults.

## Defining asylum seekers, refugees and migrants

In the UK, a child or adult who has left their country of origin can apply for asylum. While they are waiting for their application to be concluded, they are known as an asylum seeker. During this time, those that are under 18 are supported by local authorities and some are looked after by foster carers.

They gain refugee status if the government agrees that they meet the definition of a refugee set out by the United Nations: that they have a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

Usually refugees in the UK are given five years' leave to remain. After this they must then apply for further permission to remain.

A migrant is someone who has moved to another country for reasons other than persecution, such as to find work.

For more information, see the [Refugee Council website](#).

## How foster carers can help unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Children and young people who arrive in the UK seeking asylum will have many difficulties to face alongside negotiating the asylum process.

Their foster carers might be the first positive and stable relationship that these young people will have had with an adult for some time – it may take some time to earn their trust. Their foster carers will help them to maintain their cultural identity at the same time as integrating into the Welsh community. They will overcome communication hurdles imaginatively and support them to learn English. And they will help them begin their journey of healing from their past trauma and growing up into confident young adults.

By drawing upon their own unique qualities and skills, foster carers can transform the lives of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, giving them a fantastic opportunity to rebuild their lives in Wales.

## Looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

If you are fostering an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child, you may need to deal with some additional tasks, such as assisting their social worker to support the child in applying for permission to stay in the UK or enrolling them in local education or language courses. Because of their complex backgrounds, many of these children will also have particular emotional, practical, language and cultural needs.

Your fostering service should ensure that you are trained, equipped and supported to meet the needs of these children and young people.



**It takes a very special person to foster unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. But with the right support and information, we can create success stories.**

Dave Archibald, supervising social worker, Calon Cymru Fostering







**“It is important that we try our best to match children with foster carers who can understand their needs. For unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, foster carers who share their faith will have a deeper understanding of their culture and social norms.”**

Gill Grennan-Jenkins, team manager,  
Carmarthenshire County Council fostering service

Some of the challenges you may face include the following.

**• Trafficking and exploitation**

Some children are trafficked to the UK by people who force them to work as domestic helps, engage in the sex industry, enter a forced marriage or be submitted to other types of abuse. Foster carers need to be aware that some children and young people may still be at risk from their trafficker, even after they have been fostered.

Your fostering service and, if necessary, the police will support you with any challenges you face.

**• Cultural and religious needs**

It is important that the children and young people you are fostering are able to continue to observe their own cultural and religious traditions, as far as they wish. This is why it is important that we recruit a diverse pool of foster carers, so that, where possible, children and young people can be placed in families who share similar cultural and religious backgrounds.

Local community groups, which offer cultural events and connections with people from similar backgrounds, can help make the transition to living in Wales easier for children and young people, and your social worker can help you to make contact with relevant groups.

You should also support the child or young person to attend a place of worship if they want to do so.

**• Trauma**

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may have lived through war or persecution and then endured a frightening journey to the UK. They may also be missing their family and other loved ones, and may be concerned about their safety.

While all foster carers need to be aware of the impact of trauma upon the children in their care, foster carers looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children or young people should be prepared to work with other professionals to offer intensive support where necessary.

**• Language**

Many young people have limited or no English language skills when they arrive in Wales and may have had disrupted schooling. However, our experience shows that most of them are keen to learn English and pick it up quickly. Extra language support should be available to them, but foster carers will play a key role in communicating with them and helping them to make the most of the education on offer.

Your fostering service should be able to provide additional support such as an interpreter when necessary.

**• Education**

Foster carers will need to work closely with the child or young person’s teachers and their social worker to ensure that they get extra help if they need it, such as support to learn English.

If a young person you are fostering is over 16, they can choose whether they continue their education or begin vocational training. (By law, people seeking asylum cannot work in the UK, unless their initial application has been pending for at least 12 months, and then only in selected occupations.)

**• The asylum process**

A child or young person in your care may need to claim asylum while they are with you. You don’t need to be an expert in the legal processes around seeking asylum, as the child’s social worker will take the lead. The child may also have their own specialist support worker from an immigration or refugee service.

The foster carer’s role is primarily to provide emotional and practical support, helping them deal with the uncertainty that the asylum process can bring. The process can be complex and take a long time. You will need to focus on helping them to build a life and a future for themselves in the UK, at the same time as preparing them for the possibility that they may be returned to their country of origin.

**• Age assessment**

This is a procedure to determine the correct age of a young person who doesn’t have legal documents. This is to ensure that they are treated appropriately, that they receive the necessary services and support, and that proper safeguarding procedures are followed. Age assessments should be carried out by social workers.

**• Support to build a life in a new country**

Foster homes are a perfect environment for children and young people from overseas to learn to adapt to living in Wales. They will need to learn Welsh local customs, expectations and traditions, as well as building their own friendships and support networks.



**Foster carers teach us how to deal with new changes and difficulties in life and end up filling the loss that we have. Young refugees and asylum seekers need people who are like parents.**

Sunflower, who arrived in the UK when she was 16 and is now in foster care



Read Sunflower’s [blog](#) on The Fostering Network’s website

### Other resources

- Other organisations can offer support to these young people. TGP Cymru's [Young Asylum Seekers and Refugees Programme](#) helps with advocacy for a range of issues.
- Read more about the rights and needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Wales in [this leaflet](#) from the Children's Legal Centre.
- The Fostering Network has more information about fostering unaccompanied asylum-seeking children [here](#).
- Fosterline Wales has published factsheets covering a variety of fostering issues, including fostering unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. See [here](#).
- Explore the outcomes of the EU Fostering Across Borders project [here](#).
- Read more about the experience of fostering an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child [here](#).



**Foster carers help unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to settle in a safe country, be part of their family and to be part of the community. These young people have fled for their lives and foster carers help them to heal, to feel safe and free from persecution.**

Gill Grennan-Jenkins, team manager, Carmarthenshire County Council fostering service



**Foster homes are a perfect environment for children and young people from overseas to learn to adapt to living in Wales.**

### Section 4

# How do I become a foster carer?



So you would like to become a foster carer. That's great! The journey from your first enquiry to becoming approved will typically take around eight months - and there are a number of important steps to take.

### Step 1: Decide what type of fostering you'd like to do

There are several different types of foster care, such as short term, long term, short break care and support care. All of these are vital to support the mix of children who need care in Wales.

Read more about these on The Fostering Network's [types of fostering page](#).

You also need to think about which age group of children you want to foster. You can foster children from newborn to 18 years old (and now some young people may have the opportunity to live with their former foster carers until they are 21 or older under the Welsh When I am Ready scheme). You should decide upon an age group that you would feel most comfortable looking after and which would fit well into your family.

You should also consider how you would be able to meet the needs of children from varying religious and cultural backgrounds. As we will see later, the work that fostering services do to match children with foster families takes into account many factors and it's not always appropriate or possible to place children with

foster carers who exactly match their ethnicity, religious and cultural background. This is something that you should explore in more detail with your fostering service, particularly during your training and assessment.

### Step 2: Decide on a fostering service

You can choose which fostering service that you would like to work with. There are more than 30 fostering services run by local authorities in Wales as well as services run by independent organisations, including charities, co-operatives and private companies. Your fostering service should be knowledgeable, approachable and supportive.

Speak to a few services and ask them lots of questions. Fostering services vary in size and may require different types of foster carers - some may be looking for carers from a particular ethnic group or religious background. You might find that some are particularly seeking foster carers with your background, skills and experience. They may also offer different support, training and financial packages.

Find out more about the differences between fostering services on The Fostering Network's [choosing to foster page](#).

Find contact details for a service near you on The Fostering Network's [find a fostering service page](#).



When considering applying to foster, create a shortlist of services you would like to approach and take a look at their websites or contact them to find out some of the following information:

- The types of foster carers they are seeking to recruit. Do they need foster carers for babies, teenagers, children with disabilities or sibling groups (brothers and sisters), for example? How does this match with the type of fostering you would like to do?
- How do they support their foster carers? All foster carers are assigned a supervising social worker who will support them when they have children placed in their care, but what other types of support do they provide? Do they have a local foster care association or a one-to-one buddy scheme for newly approved foster carers? Once approved as a foster carer, what types of training do they offer? If you have your own children, do they have activities or information to support them? Do they have an out-of-hours support scheme?

- What is their financial support like? All foster carers receive a weekly allowance to cover the costs of fostering each child or young person, and some fostering services will also pay fees for certain types of fostering or additional training.

There are more details about fees and allowances on The Fostering Network's website [here](#).

- What do other foster carers say about the service? Are there testimonials on the website from other foster carers? Does the fostering service have social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter? How do they interact with people on these? Is there an opportunity to speak with a foster carer who already fosters for the service?
- Is there an opportunity to meet members of the fostering service in an informal setting, such as at an information session, a coffee morning or a stand on your high street or a local event? This is a good chance to discuss more about fostering for their service.



**A member of the fostering service's team will visit you in your home to have an initial discussion with you about fostering.**

### Step 3: Initial home visit

A member of the fostering service's team will visit you in your home to have an initial discussion with you about fostering. Sometimes they will be accompanied by one of the service's current foster carers. This is also your opportunity to ask questions and to get to know the foster care approval process better.

This is also another very important opportunity for you to ask as many questions as possible about fostering and its impact on you and your family.

This is a very in-depth process and will allow plenty of opportunity for reflection. This stage can take around four to five months, after which your assessor will submit a full report, including input from you, to the service's fostering panel.

### Step 4: Training and assessment

After the initial home visit, if the fostering service feels that you have the appropriate skills and experience to become a good foster carer you will be invited to attend pre-approval training which runs alongside a much more detailed assessment of you and your family. The training is usually called *The Skills to Foster™* and it covers all the basics of fostering, how to best look after the children in your care and keep them safe, as well as the practicalities of the paperwork and working with other professionals. (You can see an overview of the content of *The Skills to Foster™* course on The Fostering Network's website [here](#).)

The longest part of the process of becoming a foster carer is the detailed assessment by a qualified social worker of the suitability of your skills, experience and home environment for fostering, as well as an assessment of others in your household, including any children. The fostering service will also need to interview adult children who live outside your home, and collect references from other people involved in your life, such as your employer or former partners.

### Step 5: The fostering panel

The fostering panel is a group of experienced people from different backgrounds with a range of skills and knowledge, to help make a decision as to whether you will be a suitable foster carer. Some panel members have a professional background in childcare or social care, and others have direct experience of the fostering process, either through being a foster carer themselves or through being fostered in the past.

You will be invited to their fostering panel meeting and a discussion will take place with you and your social worker based on your fostering assessment report. The fostering panel will then make a recommendation to the fostering service about your approval.

You will be informed verbally of the outcome and panel recommendation the same day. If you are approved, the fostering service will then provide a written decision, specifying your terms of approval. If you are not approved, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed by an independent panel.

Section 5

# Being a foster carer

Once you have been approved as a foster carer you can prepare for your first arrival – congratulations!

Your family will have a supervising social worker to support you. You will be provided with post-approval paperwork, including a contract of agreement between you and your fostering service, and you should be funded to get any specialist equipment that you might need.

A child or young person may come to live with you as soon as you are approved, or it might take a while for them to arrive because it is important that your fostering service makes sure you are the right foster carer to look after a particular child or young person. Making a good match is essential for a successful fostering placement.

## Matching children with foster carers

It's crucial that the child or young person is at the centre of the decision-making when a foster family is being sought for them. This means that the fostering service must take into account the child or young person's views about their needs, including their ethnicity, language, cultural background, faith, health, education, where their family lives and their interests.

It is often not possible for fostering services to match all of these needs, and fostering services often have to weigh up different priorities. However, it is important to ensure that children and young people can develop a positive sense of their own identity and culture, and this is why Wales needs a diverse pool of foster carers.



When a fostering service feels that you are a good match to meet the needs of a particular child or young person, they will give you as much information as they can about them. It's then your choice whether you agree to that child or young person coming to live with you, taking into account the child or young person's specific requirements, such as their education and arrangements for keeping in touch with their own family.

You must give careful consideration to whether you think your family will be a good match for the child or young person's needs and how they will fit into your family.

Read more about welcoming a new arrival on The Fostering Network's website [here](#).

can come from a variety of sources that support your learning style.

The Fostering Network recommends that all foster carers should have a training plan which is tailored to the skills that they need to look after the children in their care. In Wales, the National Fostering Framework aims to standardise terms and conditions for foster carers across the country and it sets out a learning and development framework for approved foster carers, detailing core topics that foster carers should cover and the standard outcomes they are expected to meet.

Other foster carers can provide useful support too – you might be able to link up with carers who are looking after similar children to you. Your fostering service will be able to help you make contact with other foster carers, perhaps through a local foster care association, or through a peer mentoring or buddying programme.

**My foster family showed me love and kindness. They supported me to achieve my dreams and to become who I wanted to be.**

Daniel, university student and young refugee who came to the UK as a teenager

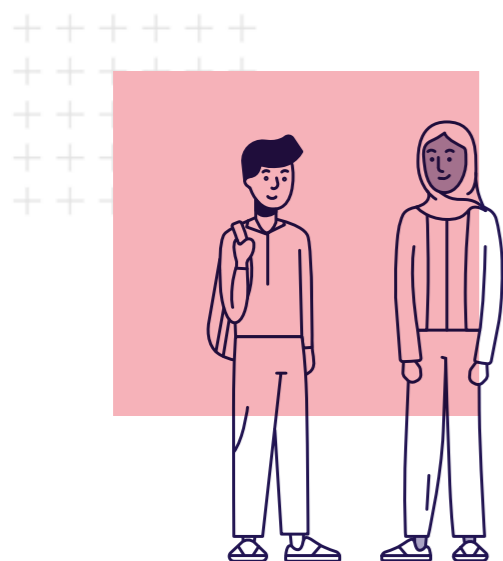
## Support, learning and development

As a foster carer you will be a member of the 'team around the child'. This is the group of professionals – such as social workers, teachers and doctors – which is responsible for the wellbeing and development of looked after children.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may be supported by some other specialists such as a legal adviser and inclusion worker.

All of the members of the team around the child should aim to communicate well together and support each other to coordinate and achieve the best outcomes for the fostered child or young person.

It is essential that foster carers continue to develop their skills and knowledge throughout their fostering careers, and that opportunities for learning and development are made available by your fostering services. To maintain your approval as a foster carer, your fostering service will conduct an annual review and you will need to undertake some training every year. That training



**Foster carers play a crucial role in supporting children's relationships with their family and friends.**

### Maintaining relationships with people important to children

Foster carers play a crucial role in supporting children's relationships with their family and friends. They need to offer a consistent, reliable base from which children can connect with their own families safely.

Every looked after child will have their own care plan, and within this a contact plan outlines all the arrangements in relation to family time. This plan should refer specifically to how the child will maintain links with and receive information about their family and friends.

### Financial support

In Wales, the Welsh Government has set a National Minimum Allowance for foster carers – this is a weekly fostering allowance to cover the cost of caring for a fostered child.

Some foster carers also receive extra payments on top of allowances to recognise their time, skills and experience. You should discuss this with your fostering service before you are approved.

Foster carers are classed as self-employed for tax and national insurance purposes and it is your responsibility to register with HMRC and submit your annual tax return. You may also be able to claim some additional benefits.

Read more about foster carer finances on The Fostering Network's website [here](#).

**“ Growing up in foster care has made me who I am today. My foster family is really showing me what family means and they have given me unconditional support along the way.**

Ric, a rap artist who grew up in foster care



## Section 6 Taking the next step

Are you ready to discover more about how you and your family could make an enormous and vital difference to a child or young person who needs fostering?

### Other resources

- Find your local fostering services by searching The Fostering Network's directory [here](#).
- Explore more about fostering on The Fostering Network's website. Start [here](#).
- Got more questions? Fosterline Wales provides an independent and confidential telephone advice service Call 0800 316 7664 from 9.30am until 12.30pm Monday to Friday or email [fosterlinewales@fostering.net](mailto:fosterlinewales@fostering.net). You can also explore the Fosterline Wales factsheets [here](#).



**“ My foster carers are extraordinary. They took me in when I needed it most and they, along with my school, looked out for me like nobody had before.**

Elle, a care-experienced young person



Section 7

# How The Fostering Network can help

The Fostering Network offers advice, information and support. Our expertise and knowledge are always up-to-date and available through our vital member helplines, publications, training and consultancy.

Even if you're not yet a member, there are many resources that potential foster carers could find useful.

## Advice

[Fosterline Wales](#) is a free confidential and impartial advice line to support you as a foster carer, or if you are thinking of becoming a foster carer.

Call us on 0800 316 7664 from 9.30am to 12.30pm, Monday to Friday. If you call outside this time please leave a message and someone will call you back within 48 hours.

You can email us or write to us at: [fosterlinewales@fostering.net](mailto:fosterlinewales@fostering.net)



## Support and resources

Our website is an essential source of information, and our online community brings foster carers together for peer support and advice. Members can log in to share their experience and get advice from other foster carers. Our online community is a safe and secure area to discuss foster care matters.

[thefosteringnetwork.org.uk](http://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk)

## Training and consultancy

Wherever you are in your fostering career, as a foster carer, social worker or manager, The Fostering Network has a range of training designed to meet your development needs.

For more information, contact our learning and development manager, Sarah Mobedji at [sarah.mobedji@fostering.net](mailto:sarah.mobedji@fostering.net)

Read more about becoming a foster carer on The Fostering Network's website [here](#).

# The Fostering Network

**The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children.**

We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

We work to ensure all fostered children and young people experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

 [thefosteringnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/thefosteringnetwork)

 [@fosteringnet](https://twitter.com/fosteringnet)

 [@thefosteringnetwork](https://www.instagram.com/thefosteringnetwork)

[thefosteringnetwork.org.uk](https://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk)

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