



## What is fostering?

Fostering is a way of providing care in a safe home environment for a child (aged between 0 and 18 years) who, for a variety of reasons, cannot stay in their own family home.

Unlike adoption, which ends a child's legal relationship with their birth family, fostered children remain the legal responsibility of the local authority (in this case, Hartlepool Borough Council) and their birth parents.

Some children may have disabilities or challenging behaviour, but all need care and compassion to help them reach their full potential.

## Types of fostering

There are many different ways to foster: it doesn't have to be a full-time commitment. There are different types of fostering placements and part-time carers make a valuable contribution, too. You may be interested in:

### Long-term fostering

Long-term foster carers care for children for longer periods, often years. Many of these children still benefit from regular contact with their families.

## Join the team!

We would love to talk to you about joining our team and to see if fostering a Hartlepool child is right for you.

### Talk to the Hartlepool Fostering Team by:

- E-mail: [fosterandadopt@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:fosterandadopt@hartlepool.gov.uk)
- Postal address and telephone:

## About this booklet

We issued this booklet in January 2012 and updated it in November 2014. We will check that it is up to date in November 2016.



You can download more of our information, including details of our complaints procedures, from [www.hartlepool.gov.uk/childrenfactsheets](http://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/childrenfactsheets)

# Meet our foster carers

## Elaine



“Hi, I’m Elaine and I foster as a career.

“While my husband Chris continues to work, I’ve chosen fostering as my career and have gained professional childcare qualifications. We foster children of all ages including teenagers. We are very much a fostering family and my two sons have really benefited from us being a foster family. My eldest son Danny is now involved with Fostering

Network as a voice for birth sons and daughters.

“Being a foster carer is the best career move I’ve ever made. Give it a go and make a difference.”

## Gillian and Gary

“Gary and I have been fostering now for seven years and we see fostering very much as a partnership. Gary works full time and comes home to enjoy time with the children and I am at home full time with the foster children and our own four boys.

“We always have a very busy house but we wouldn’t have it any other way. We like the children that we foster to experience a fun-filled family life. We get a real sense of achievement from fostering to see the difference our family has made to a young child.”



## Support care

Support foster carers provide care for a child for up to 3 nights each week. They play an essential role an intensive package of support which enables a child to remain at home with their family.

## Short-term fostering

Short-term foster carers provide care for children on a temporary basis. This could be anything from one night to a few months, until we resolve family difficulties or find a long-term placement for the child.

## Respite and short break fostering

Respite and short break foster carers help support families in crisis or give other carers a break. They provide care for children (who may have physical or learning disabilities) on occasional weekends, or for slightly longer.

## Mother and baby support

Mother and baby carers work with young mothers and their babies, helping mum to learn the skills she needs to care for her baby on her own.

## All kinds of people can foster

Hartlepool's foster carers come from all walks of life. They are people who are single, married, employed, unemployed, homeowners and people living in rented accommodation. If you want to become a foster carer but aren't sure if you'll qualify, don't rule yourself out before talking to us.

You must be at least 25 years old to become a foster carer. There is no upper age limit, but you must be able to care for and meet the needs of a child or young person in your charge.

We are always happy to talk to anyone who is interested in fostering, including:

- single people
- married couples
- same sex couples
- people with their own children at home
- people who do not have children or whose children have grown up and left home

You do not need to have lots of experience of looking after children to become a foster carer but you will need to:

- like children and be committed to their needs and rights
- be flexible and open minded
- be able to work as part of a team
- be willing to learn

## Fostering allowances

We pay an allowance to foster carers to cover the costs associated with caring for a child. This allowance covers basic living costs and some additional costs such as clothing and transport. It does not affect any benefit entitlements.

## Support for our foster carers

If you are interested in becoming a foster carer we will invite you to a preparation training course consisting of several enjoyable, informative sessions. You will meet current foster carers, share their experiences and learn first-hand about the highs and lows of fostering.

Should you become an approved foster carer, your appointed fostering social worker will be there to support and advise you. We host regular support groups and training events where foster carers can share experiences and feel part of our fostering community.