

# Making a difference: **becoming a foster carer**



# Fostering changes lives

You can change a young person's life by offering them a home, a place to recover from previous trauma, and to start adapting to life in the UK.

Most young refugees are in their mid to late teens, so foster carers are essential in helping them transition to adulthood in a new country.

Young people can show remarkable resilience and adaptability, but they need good support. As a foster carer, you'll be able to help a young person navigate complicated UK systems that may be familiar to you, but are totally new to them.

By fostering a young refugee, you'll also be playing an important role in making Yorkshire and Humber a welcoming place for newcomers. There's a real shortage of foster carers, and you can help.

**“ People think they have to be this perfect person to become a foster carer - and they don't. It's compassion that is key”.**

Rachel, foster carer



# How do I become a foster carer?

The process from making your first enquiry to becoming an approved foster carer will vary according to where you live and will broadly include the following steps:



# Application process

## Phone call

This is an opportunity for you to find out more about fostering young refugees and for social workers to ask you a few screening questions.

## Home visit

A social worker will come and visit you at home. They will ask you some questions about your life, experience, skills and motivations and see if your home is suitable for fostering.

## Assessment

If the home visit is successful a social worker will then visit you and your family on a regular basis for anything between 3-8 months to assess your suitability for the role.

## Training

During the assessment period you will also attend some pre-approval training to prepare you for welcoming children and young people into your home.

## Panel

Your social worker will make a recommendation which will then go to an independent panel of professionals for consideration. You are supported to attend this panel meeting by your social worker.

## Approval

If your local authority agrees with a panel decision for approval, you will then become a registered foster carer for your local authority and can begin looking after children and young people!

## Post-approval

You will be allocated a social worker to support you throughout your time as a foster carer. They will visit you regularly to offer you guidance and support and link you in to relevant training.



# What support will I receive as a foster carer?

- Your own fostering social worker who will offer guidance and support throughout your time as a foster carer.
- Training opportunities to develop additional skills.
- The opportunity to develop your skills as a foster carer.
- You will be able to meet other carers and can attend local support groups.
- 24 hour emergency support via telephone.
- Competitive fees and allowances.
- Additional allowances for the child's activities, annual holiday, cultural celebrations, clothing and school uniforms.
- The child in your care also has their own social worker.

In addition, we can provide further training about the practical issues around looking after young refugees. We can also connect you with other carers in your area who have experience of looking after young refugees.



# Frequently asked questions

## **Is fostering a young refugee challenging?**

Fostering a young refugee requires a deep level of compassion to help heal the trauma they have experienced – both internal and external. But with ongoing support and training, you will be well equipped with knowledge, skills and a good understanding of their needs. Foster carers report finding the role hugely rewarding.

## **Can I still work while fostering?**

As young refugees are mostly teenagers, you can often work as long as you have time to be there for them and support them to settle and adapt to their new life in the UK. You also need to have flexibility to support a young person to attend appointments and take them to school or college. When young people first arrive it is likely you will need to be at home full time whilst they are waiting for a school or college placement.

## **Do I have to own my own home?**

No, you can rent a home and foster as long as you have a legal tenancy with your landlord and their agreement. You must have at least one spare bedroom for a child. This is because they require their own space and privacy – something a young refugee may never have had before. There may be occasions where fostered siblings can share a bedroom, but the criteria for becoming a foster carer is having a spare bedroom.

## **Does my age, sexuality or religion prevent me from fostering?**

Foster placements should be inclusive and diverse. We welcome enquiries from the LGBTQ+ community as well of those from different faiths and backgrounds. Young people may have left their homes due to political or religious persecution or because of their sexual orientation so an open, understanding and supportive attitude is important. There is no upper age limit to foster, but some Local Authorities ask that you are over the age of 21 or 25. You need to be fit and healthy enough to undertake the task and will be required to have a medical undertaken by your GP.

## **Can I foster if I have my own children?**

Yes. Many carers have their own children and local authorities match a child to your household. Having younger children does not mean that you can't foster teenagers. Having your own children gives you valuable experience that could be useful when a child is placed with you. Your children will need to be 'on board' with fostering and their views will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment process.

## **Contact us**

Email: [wyr@migrationyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:wyr@migrationyorkshire.org.uk)

Facebook: [@WelcomingYoungRefugees](https://www.facebook.com/WelcomingYoungRefugees)

Website: [www.welcomingyoungrefugees.org.uk](http://www.welcomingyoungrefugees.org.uk)