

# We care for West Lothian's children



We need caring and committed local people to foster babies, children and young people.

Some children need to be looked after for a few days or months.

Some children need to be looked after for all of their childhood.

Lots of different kinds of people can foster.

Foster carers can make a huge difference in a child's life.

We care...  
**Could you?**



[www.westlothianchcp.org.uk](http://www.westlothianchcp.org.uk)



West Lothian Community Health and Care Partnership



## why care?

Foster carers, their own children, and the children they look after share their experiences.

*“ Being in care means a new home, a new family, and a new life ”*

Looked after children, aged 10 and 12

*“ I know that I am getting looked after well and that my carers care about me ”*

Looked after child, aged 13

*“ I feel safe and have fun ”*

Looked after child, aged 8

*“ Having other children in your family life can be rewarding and fulfilling ”*

Foster caring couple who have their own adult children

*“ One of the rewards of fostering is seeing the children growing and going on to a loving family, sometimes returning home to parents or sometimes finding a new ‘forever family’ ”*

Foster carer for very young babies and toddlers

*“ Once the children are returned home I feel a great sense of achievement in being part of that process ”*

Foster care who provides short-term placements

*“ Myself and my family love being carers and would not change it ”*

Single foster carer who has her own young children

*“ Our children say that they have been given a great opportunity in life to help and understand children with greater needs than themselves ”*

Foster caring couple who have their own children

*“ The most rewarding part of being a carer is when the young adult still keeps contact even when they have moved on to independent living ”*

Foster carer with over twenty years' experience

*“ I like that I get to meet all different types and ages of children. It's nice to see that they're having a good time. My mum is very good at her job and makes time for all of us individually ”*

Child of a foster carer, aged 14

*“ For anyone who feels like they would like to foster, I'd say that if they're up to the challenge, have loads of patience, a willingness to learn new things, have loads of time for the children and young people, and will listen and try to understand their problems, then go for it! ”*

Foster carer who has two children in permanent placement



## who for?

### The children who need foster families

Children who need foster families are aged 0-16. There are many reasons why children and young people might need to be accommodated with foster carers. These can include:

- Families being unable to cope
- Parental ill-health
- Parental drug or alcohol misuse
- Abuse
- Neglect
- School attendance concerns
- Youth offending
- Abandonment

Children who need foster families are not different from other children but they will often have experienced troubled or disrupted family lives, or can have experienced separation, loss or abuse. They are likely to have a high level of need and may present some challenging or difficult behaviour.

Fostering is a way of offering these children and young people a safe, stable, family environment while their own families are unable to look after them.

Some children will need a regular short-break away from their families, over a period of time, to help to support them to stay at home.

Some children and young people will need to be looked after for a short time to allow their families the chance to sort out their problems and will return home. For some children, it can take a few months or years for their own families to get back on their feet.

For some children, their families' difficulties are so serious that they cannot return home. These children may stay permanently with foster carers until they are adults or they may move on to adoptive families.





# what is fostering?

Find out about different kinds of fostering and what foster carers do

Fostering means providing family-based care for children and young people who cannot live with their own families.

West Lothian Council foster carers have to be approved. Their approval will say:

- what kind of fostering they can offer
- what age of children they can care for
- how many children they can care for

Foster carer approvals are reviewed every year and can change.

## There are different kinds of fostering:

### ➤ Full-Time Fostering

This means caring for a child on a full-time basis. Children needing a full-time foster family will be aged 0-16, although they may continue to be cared for until they are 18. Children may need full-time fostering for a few days or weeks, or they may need to stay with a foster family for a few months, or even years. Full-time fostering will support children until they either return home or move on to longer-term care either through permanent fostering or adoption.

### ➤ Permanent Fostering

This means caring for a child who is never going to be able to return to live with their birth family. Children needing a permanent fostering family can be any age but will need a fostering family who will care for them into adulthood. Babies and younger children who cannot return to their families are more likely to need an adoptive family.

Adoption transfers the parental rights and responsibilities to adoptive parents and the child is no longer in the care of the local authority. If you are interested in adoption, rather than fostering, we would encourage you to contact an adoption agency. West Lothian Council does not currently recruit adopters. We would usually identify adoptive families through one of our two partner agencies either **Scottish Adoption Association (0131 553 5060)** or **St Andrew's Children's Society (0131 454 3370)**.

Permanent fostering offers a child a secure and safe family to grow up in while usually still keeping in touch with their family. The local authority continues to be involved and foster carers and the child would each have a social worker who would maintain regular contact.

## ➤ Short-Break Fostering

This means looking after children for a short time to give families or carers a break. A short break may be a one-off or it might take place regularly. Children needing a short break may be living with their family or with another foster carer. Children may have a disability, whether physical or learning difficulties, and need time away from their families.

## ➤ Supported Adult Placement

When a young person has been living with a foster carer for some time, and reaches 18, there is an option for the foster carers' approval to change to a supported adult placement approval. This means that young adults can continue to be supported for some time before they move on.

If you are interested in offering supported adult placements from the outset you can contact the **Throughcare/Aftercare Team on 01506 771767 or email on [TCACReferral@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:TCACReferral@westlothian.gov.uk)**

Approved foster carers, in addition to offering one (or sometimes a combination) of the kinds of fostering, may also wish to be approved to offer some outreach fostering. There are two kinds of outreach fostering:

## ➤ Befriending

This means working with a child or young person on a one-to-one basis. A befriender will help to guide and assist children and young people through difficult times. They may be living at home, or living with another foster carer or in a residential setting.

## ➤ Family Support

This means working directly with parents and children in their own home. This can include budgeting, household tasks, managing difficult

behaviour or establishing routines for children. This support can be significant in helping to keep families together and can offer extra help at times of crisis.

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The money paid to carers varies depending on the approval of the carer and the type of care offered. Full-time and permanent fostering carers receive a weekly allowance to cover the costs of caring for each child in placement along with a fee payment in recognition of their work. For short-break fostering this fee and allowance is paid on a pro-rata basis. Outreach fostering is paid on a sessional/hourly basis.

For further information about carer payments please contact the Family Placement Team.

Foster carers provide a good standard of care for other people's children. They also do much more:

- Foster carers support children in their education, look after their health and support their social wellbeing
- Foster carers have an understanding of the difficulties parents face and often work closely with children's families and others who are important to the child
- Foster carers may help children to come to terms with difficult or traumatic experiences
- Foster carers may manage difficult or challenging behaviour
- Foster carers work in partnership with social workers and other professionals
- Foster carers attend meetings and contribute to making care plans for children and young people
- Foster carers keep records and maintain confidentiality
- Foster carers are motivated to develop new skills and learn new things through reading, discussion and attending training.



# who can foster?

Things to think about when considering becoming a foster carer.

**Foster carers can come from all kinds of ethnic, religious, cultural and diverse backgrounds. Lots of different kinds of people foster.**

- You can be single
- You can be living with a partner
- You can be married or have a civil partner
- You can have your own children or step-children
- You can have no children at all
- You can own your own home or be renting
- You can be any age, over 21, as long as your health and well-being allows
- You can offer short-break fostering at weekends if you are working full-time
- You can be unemployed
- You can have been 'in care' yourself

**What is important is that you must be able to:**

- Be warm, patient, understanding and flexible
- Be non-judgemental
- Negotiate and compromise
- Provide good quality care for children
- Care for children safely
- Support children who may have experienced neglect or abuse
- Cope with children whose behaviour may sometimes be difficult and challenging
- Understand and work with parents who have been unable to look after their child, harmed their child or failed to protect their child
- Work as part of a team which includes a child's family, social worker, education and health staff
- Be willing to learn and develop new skills.





## where do you go from here?

Find out about the process of applying to become a foster carer.

**You read all the background information about fostering either in our enquiry pack or on the website.**

**You register your interest in becoming a Foster Carer with West Lothian Council by completing and returning the form at the end of this pack.**

**A social worker from West Lothian Council Family Placement Team contacts you to arrange an initial home visit.**

**You are invited to attend a Preparation Group – All prospective foster carers are required to attend training to prepare themselves and their household for a career in fostering with West Lothian Council. You will cover the following topics:**

- 1. What do Foster Carers do?**
- 2. Who are the Children and Young People?**
- 3. Working together**
- 4. Safer Caring**
- 5. Understanding Behaviour**
- 6. Moving on**

**You decide if you want to formally apply to become a carer.**

**Start the assessment.**  
A social worker will be allocated.

Your worker will look at your relevant skills, knowledge and experiences. We call these competencies. We assess your competencies by gathering information about you from a wide range of sources (checks and references) and from the evidence you give yourself about your skills. This process is called the home study.

The home study will include the following checks and references, with your consent:

- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) police disclosure check
- Full medical
- Local authority checks
- Personal references
- Employment history
- Employment reference
- Previous partners and older and adult children

We aim to complete the home study process within six months.

Your assessing social worker writes a report outlining your skills, training needs and areas of vulnerability. You will contribute to this report. A recommendation is made about what kind of fostering you should be approved for and the age and number of children you could care for.

### **Fostering Panel**

Once all the information has been gathered the report is submitted to a Fostering Panel who recommend whether the applicant is suitable to foster. You are expected to attend.

If you are approved you will receive more information and training opportunities.

A child/young person will be placed with you.

Your approval is reviewed annually, or when there is significant change in your circumstances.

If you are not approved, discuss the reasons with your social worker. Sometimes it may be possible to re-apply in the future. You can appeal against the decision, and your social worker will ensure that you are given information on the appeal procedures.



# what do we do?

## The Family Placement Team

Family Placement Team social workers are happy to offer fuller information about fostering either on the telephone, by email, or by visiting you at home.

### **Our contact details are:**

Tel: 01506 775677

Email: [fostercare@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:fostercare@westlothian.gov.uk)

Address: Strathbrock Partnership Centre  
189a West Main Street  
Broxburn  
West Lothian  
EH52 5LH

Website: [www.westlothian.gov.uk/lovefostering](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/lovefostering)

Twitter: [@lovefostering](https://twitter.com/lovefostering).

We are a team of qualified social workers. We provide preparation training for people interested in fostering. We make assessments of people who apply to become foster carers. We also offer a number of supports to foster carers, such as:

- Support from an allocated supervising social worker for them and their families
- Preparation before a child is placed (i.e. background and historical information about the child or young person and their family circumstances)
- Ongoing training on a wide variety of topics
- Planning and support alongside the child's social worker
- Out-of-hours support from the Social Care Emergency Team (SCET)
- Payments for their work as a carer and to cover the costs of caring for a child
- Group support and the opportunity to meet up regularly with other carers
- A 'buddy' service where new carers are linked to an experienced carer for support and guidance
- Group support for their own young children.

West Lothian Council's Family Placement Team is a registered fostering agency. We comply with the National Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services. We are regularly inspected by the Care Inspectorate. You can find out what they have said about our service on our website.

We welcome your feedback, whether this is to tell us we are doing a good job or to let us know about things we need to improve. To tell us what you think please complete and return our feedback form.

The council has a complaints procedure that you can use if you are unhappy about some aspect of the service you have received. Further details of the complaints procedure can be supplied on request.

Alternatively, you may contact the Care Inspectorate who have a responsibility for registering and inspecting our fostering service and who have a complaints procedure that can be accessed by people using or wishing to use the service.

**Care Inspectorate,  
Stuart House,  
Eskmills,  
Musselburgh,  
East Lothian,  
EH21 7PB.  
Tel: 0845 600 9527.  
Email: [enquiries@scswis.com](mailto:enquiries@scswis.com).  
Web: [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)**

*“I would say to anyone thinking about fostering to definitely give it a go... you will not be on your own. You will be part of a team of people who are always on hand to give guidance and support.”*

Foster carer



# Enquiry Form

## Applicant 1

Name ..... DOB .....

## Applicant 2

Name ..... DOB .....

## Contact Details

Address .....

Telephone numbers .....

Email address .....

## Household Members

Name ..... DOB ..... Relationship .....

Pets .....

How did you hear about our service? .....

What kind of fostering are you interested in? (please tick)

Full-Time Fostering

Permanent Fostering

Short-Break Fostering

Please note any particular queries you have .....



Return to:

**Family Placement Team**  
**Strathbrock Partnership Centre**  
**189a West Main Street**  
**Broxburn, West Lothian EH52 5LH**

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West Lothian's children



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Could you?

