

Family Support Carer Guide



Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council 

Why is the Family Support Carer so important?

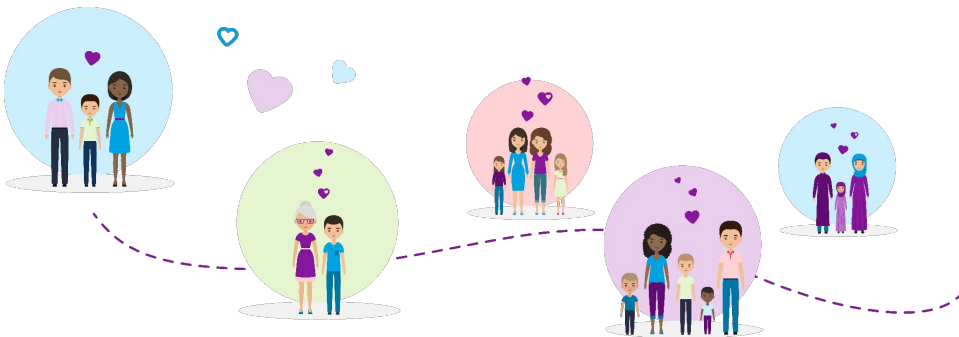
The family support carer is so crucial. The support provided is often paramount to keeping the home match stable. The foster carer will be entitled to support from the fostering services, but we always ask that they have their own support too. It is more 'normal' for a looked after child to go to a family friend's house if the carer is going out or has a medical emergency than to go to another foster carer's house, who they might not have met before.

You have been identified to fulfil this task and it is important that you are aware of what you are agreeing to.

This leaflet will outline what may be expected of you in this role. These expectations may include:

- To be on hand in case of an emergency. This could include caring for the looked after child/ren or supporting the carer in an emotional way.
- To be the main 'go to' person for the carer.
- To be able to get to the carer's house in a relatively short space of time.
- This could include caring for the looked after child in your own home.
- To undertake a DBS check (criminal records check).
- If you have children of your own, you need to work out how you would manage this.

As a family support carer, you've been asked by your friend or family member to help with their assessment. This means we'll send you a personal reference for the carer and the allocated worker will want to meet you in person to 'interview' you about the role you are about to undertake and the carers that have put you down as a referee.



Family Support Carer

What does fostering mean?

Fostering is when a family looks after a child or young person that is unable to live with their own parents. This could be for a few days, weeks, months or even years. The child could be placed with the foster carers under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, which means that the parent has chosen voluntarily to ask the Local Authority to accommodate their child or under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 which means that a Care Order was granted by a Judge in Court.

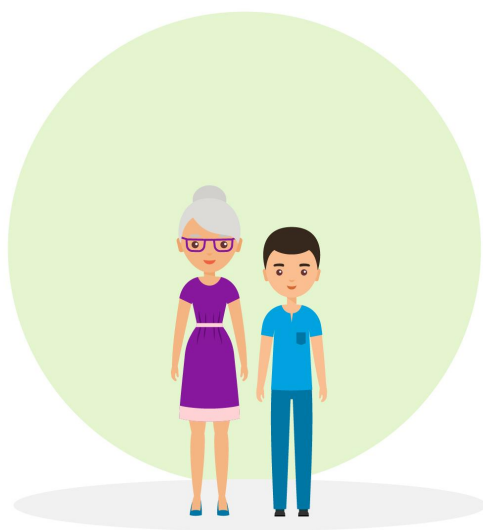
There are different types of fostering;

Emergency Carers

Emergency foster carers take children at very short notice when there is an urgent need for them to be placed in a safe home. This usually lasts for just a few days while the local authority assesses what's best for the child's ongoing care. Often, this type of care is done alongside other types of home matches.

Second Home Carers

Second Home Care, also known as Respite Care is a short period of care that allows looked after children some time away from their foster carers in order to have new experiences with foster carers that are familiar to them, like a second family.



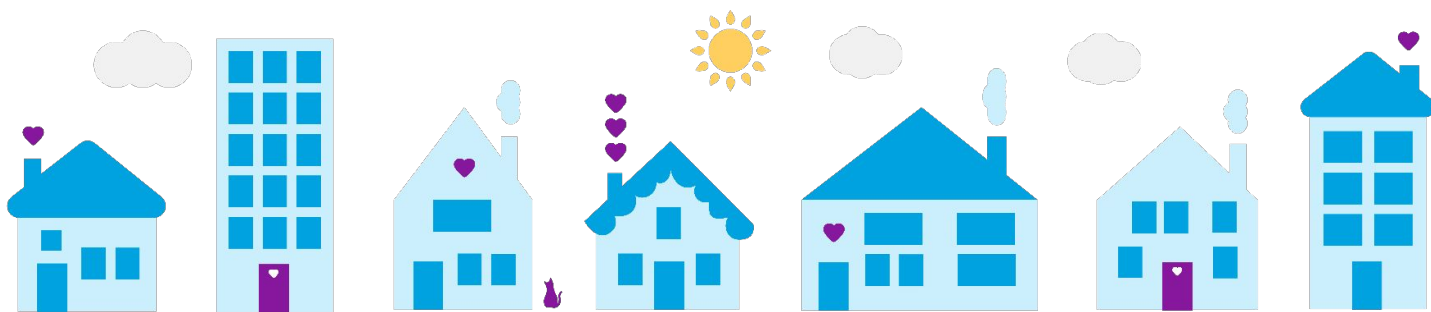
Family Support Carer

Task Centred Carers

Task centred foster care, also known as short term foster care, can range from a one night stay to a period of up to two years while the local authority assesses what the best next steps are for the child's future care. Task centred foster care is for looked after children who need a temporary place to stay before returning to their families or into longer-term fostering or adoption.

Long-Term Carers

If children are not able to go back to their own families long-term fostering offers children a more stable home, often lasting until they are 18 and older. Having a stable home is key for the development of all looked after children and can be equally rewarding for the foster family.

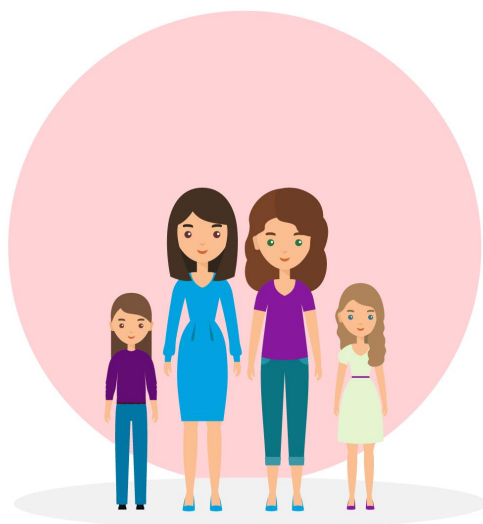


Before you have a child in your care

Before the looked after child comes to your house, discuss with the foster carer what rules they have in their house, which are important and which can be relaxed. The looked after child will have something called a Safe Care Policy and this lays out all the ways that you and the child can be protected when they are in your care. It is important that the foster carer shares the outline of these rules with you. These will include:

- Not getting into bed with the looked after child and not allowing them in your bed. You will not know what the child has been through previously and by putting this rule in place, you are protecting both yourself and the child.
- Wearing suitable nightclothes around the house so that if you do need to get up in the night you are appropriately covered.
- Knocking on bedroom doors before you open them. Foster families also have to be strict about only allowing the looked after child to watch films or play computer games that have an appropriate age restriction.

You will obviously want to know as much as you can about the looked after child, but this can be difficult due to confidentiality; you will only be told what you need to know that could affect how you care for the child. The child's story is only theirs to tell and they may choose not to or be unable to share it with you. You will be told enough to keep the child safe.



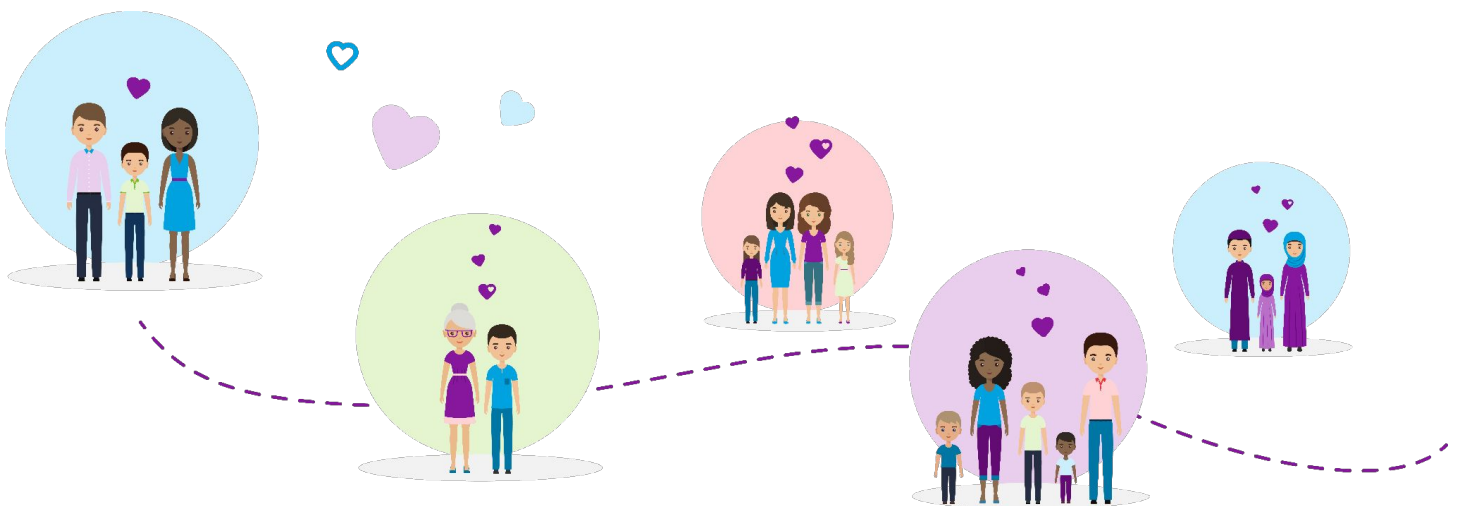
Before you have a child in your care

The foster carer might have cared for the child on an emergency basis and this child may not have been known to Social Care beforehand, so we might not have a lot of information about the child before they came into Local Authority care.

Don't be afraid to ask questions to the foster carer but they might not be able to answer them all.

It is not recommended that the looked after child shares a bedroom with your birth child.

The looked after child may show difficult behaviour such as lying, stealing, not talking, being violent, shouting, breaking things, bed wetting or being 'hyperactive'. The child is displaying these behaviours because of the trauma that they have previously suffered, and it is important to remind yourself that this is not a personal attack, although it might seem like that sometimes. Some of the children are displaying these behaviours in order for you to take notice of them because this has worked in the past. The best way to deal with these behaviours is to treat the child in a therapeutic way and not necessarily how you might react to a birth child; it would be really beneficial if you could attend some training on this. It would also be beneficial to speak to the foster carer to find out how they deal with the challenging behaviour.



Further Important Information

Family Time

Most looked after children will have Family Time (sometimes called 'contact') with their family. This can happen on an almost daily basis (if they are babies and the plan for the child has not yet been decided) to three times a year if they are long-term fostered. Sometimes, it might just be letterbox contact (which is when the carer and the child's birth family write to one another an agreed amount of times per year). As a family support carer, you might not have to be involved with Family Time, although it could be beneficial for you to have an understanding of how often it is and who it is with in case the child talks about their family or the child's behaviour changes before and/or after Family Time.



Further Important Information

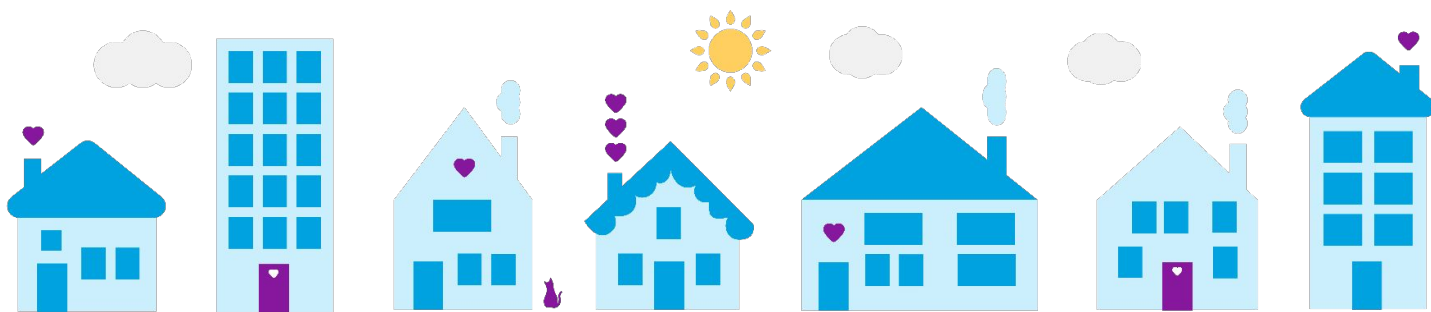
Support Groups

Foster carers are expected to attend support groups. These are run by Supervising Social Workers and all different types of foster carers can attend. These are beneficial to discuss the other carer's experiences, new events that are happening and any training that is coming up. As the family support carer, you could attend the support group with the foster carer if you feel that it would be beneficial.

Confidentiality

Sometimes a looked after child might tell you something and ask that you keep it secret, this might be something to do with something they have done recently, for example, they may have broken something in the house or about something that has happened in the past. It might be easier for them to speak to you as they might not see you as someone with an agenda.

Some things might be difficult to listen to and if the looked after child starts to tell you something, it's important to remember that it is not their fault that they have experienced this. Do not agree to keep secrets. If the information is concerning, you have a duty to pass this on to the foster carer and the child's allocated social worker.



Glossary

Allegations

Occasionally, a looked after child may tell someone that they have been treated badly by a foster carer. This is called an allegation and social workers have a duty to investigate whether this has happened. The child may need to move to another home match while the investigation is taking place.

Disclosure

This is when the looked after child tells someone for the first time that someone has abused them. This is discussed above and if the child makes a disclosure to you, you have a duty to report this.

Home Match (Also known as family match)

When a child comes to live with a foster carer, this is often called a home match or a family match as the looked after child is matched to their new family/home.

Social worker - Assessing Social Worker

This is the Social Worker who completes the prospective foster carer's assessment. Once the assessment is complete and if the foster carer is approved, a Supervising Social Worker will be allocated to support the foster carer.

Social worker - Child's Social Worker

This is the Social Worker who will regularly visit the child and is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the child's care planning.

Social worker - Supervising Social Worker

This is the Social Worker who is responsible for the support and supervision of the foster carer. Every foster carer has a supervising social worker allocated to them to support, advise and guide in every aspect of fostering.

Glossary

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

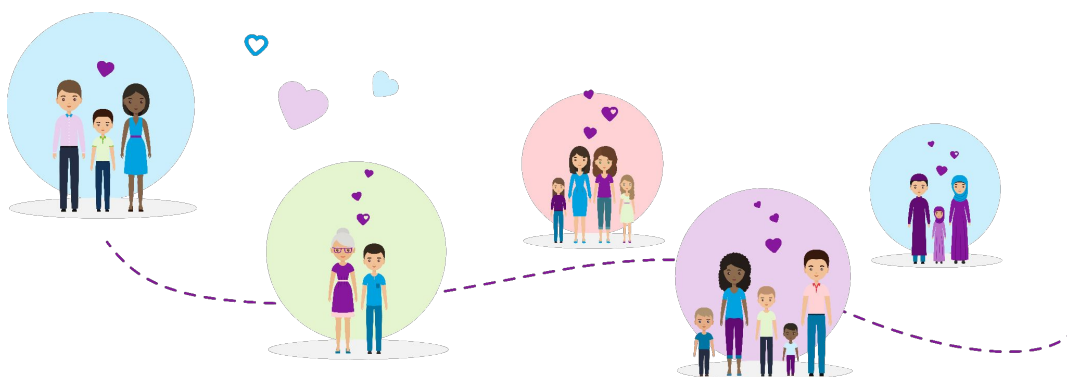
IROs are highly experienced social workers whose duty is to ensure the care plans for children in care are legally compliant and in the child's best interest. Each child will have an allocated IRO and their IRO will chair the child's six monthly Looked After Child review meetings.

There is also an IRO who is responsible for ensuring the suitability of foster carers and that the terms of approval fully reflect their competence in meeting Looked After Children's needs, using Local Authority and National Framework on carers competencies. The Fostering IRO will chair the foster carer's annual review.

Reviews

A looked after child has a Looked After Child Review every six months. This is in the first month of being placed in a new home match and then three months after that. These meetings are chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer and attended by the child's birth parent(s), the child's foster carer(s) the child's allocated social worker, the foster carer's supervising social worker, the child's school nurse, the allocated safeguarding lead at school and/or the class teacher and any other professionals that are involved with the child. It might be that you may play a significant part in the looked after child's life you might be expected to attend. These reviews are held to ensure that the plan for the child is being implemented and is currently in the child's best interest.

The foster carer will also have annual reviews, this is when the Supervising Social Worker, the foster carer and an Independent Reviewing Officer will meet to discuss how the foster carer's have got on in the past year and to understand whether they still meet Fostering Requirements. It may be important for you to attend the review.



Get in Touch with Our Team

You can get in touch with the Fostering Rotherham team in a variety of ways, including:



Phone
01709 357370



Email
support@fosteringrotherham.com



Once approved as a foster carer, you will also receive contact details for our out of hours and emergency services.



fosteringrotherham.com