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# **FOSTERING WITH TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

**Fostering Service Information Pack**

[www.trafford.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.trafford.gov.uk/fostering)



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# What is Foster Care?

**Fostering is when people provide a safe and caring environment in their own home for children and young people, including those who have additional and complex needs. Fostering can be challenging but can also be very rewarding and lots of fun!**

**Fostering is a way of looking after children who are not able to live with their own families. Some children need to stay for a few days, others a few months and some older children need to be with a family until they become adults.**

Fostering allows children and young people to stay in contact with their own families wherever possible and appropriate to the child's wellbeing.

To become a foster carer you must register as self-employed and pay national insurance contributions. The current rules mean many UK foster carers now pay no tax on the money they earn from fostering. Foster carers can be exempt from tax on all or most of their fostering income. A proportion of your income is subject to income tax but there are tax concessions available to foster carers (<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/foster-carers.htm>).

You may also be entitled to other benefits (<https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/claiming-benefits-while-fostering>).

You will be responsible for providing fully comprehensive car insurance as well as property and household contents insurance, you may also wish to consider providing provision for a personal pension and ill health/sickness incapacity.



## In return for your commitment you will receive:

- > Advice, guidance and support from an allocated Supervising Social Worker
- > Weekly age related fostering allowance when a child is in placement. Allowances are paid for birthdays, religious festivals and holidays. An interim fee is paid for up to three months if the carer has not been requested to take a placement
- > Skills Payment
- > Invitations to attend the monthly Foster Carer Support Group and have access to support and advice from the Trafford Foster Carers Association
- > Based within the Children in Care Service is a team of Child Psychologists who work with foster carers, children, social workers and parents to support children in care to ensure their emotional and mental health needs are met
- > The Children in Care Service employs a Learning Mentor to support children in care with their education. The learning mentor can provide information and advice to carers as well as direct work to support children and young people
- > There are two Community Nurses for Children in Care who are based within the Children in Care Service and located at Trafford Town Hall. The nurses will be informed when a child comes into care and will work with the child, carer and social worker to ensure the child's initial health assessment is carried out. The nurse will follow up any health problems identified and refer to other health services where necessary. Foster carers can contact the nurses directly for advice on a range of health issues. The nurses have a wide range of knowledge on health issues and can provide carers and children with information and advice.



- > FosterTalk membership - providing high quality, professional, independent support to foster care households
- > Access to Trafford's Outreach Team - available to telephone from 9am to 9pm – this maybe for advice or to off-load after a challenging situation
- > Invitations to events held throughout the year such as the Fostering Service Christmas Party, Foster Fun Days, Sons and Daughters' Week and Achievement Ceremonies.
- > The Family Placement Team Training Officer provides an annual Training Programme of training courses available to foster carers. There is a comprehensive programme of training covering a wide range of subjects designed to equip carers and build on existing skills.
- > The Family Placement Duty Service provides advice, guidance and a contact point on matters relating to fostering when your own Supervising Social Worker (SSW) is not available, including reporting serious or urgent matters. The Duty Worker is responsible for contacting carers regarding referrals and matching children with foster placements
- > Trafford Council's Emergency Duty Team can be contacted outside of working hours to assist with emergency situations

# The Fostering Process



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The foster carer approval process will normally take between 6-9 months. Trafford's Fostering Service has a duty to make sure that you can offer a safe and caring environment where a child or young person will feel welcomed, valued and supported throughout their time with you.

During the approval process, if we feel that you are not suited to fostering we will discuss this with you.

If at any stage during this process you feel that this is not the right thing for you or your family, you can withdraw.

## The process to become an approved foster carer involves:

### Initial Visit

Trafford's Fostering Recruitment Officer will contact you once you have had time to read this pack to answer any initial questions and ask if you want to continue your interest in fostering and if so will arrange a visit from one of the Supervising Social Workers.

You will be able to ask any detailed questions you have and find out more about the fostering process and what is involved. The worker will ask to look around your home and ask you some basic questions. This is necessary to make certain you have sufficient accommodation and that you are able to continue with your fostering application.

## Preparation Group and Foster Carer Training

These courses offer you an opportunity to learn more about fostering. The course will contribute to your assessment and will include meeting some of our existing foster carers.

### Home Study

This assessment involves home visits from a social worker experienced in foster care to find out more about you, your family and your lifestyle. This is the lengthiest part of the process and can feel intrusive at times but we need to ensure we get it right for young people in your care. Just as importantly, we need to make sure it's the right move for you.

## Checks and References

Naturally, we have an obligation to make sure that all Foster Carers are suitable to look after vulnerable children and young people. These checks are necessary and include:

- > Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check on everyone aged 18 years and over living in your home as well as friends or family members who will provide support to you. This will check that nobody has anything in their past that would put a child or young person in your care at risk of harm.
- > Local Authority checks
- > GP medical and reference
- > Interviews with any other adults in the household.

- > A written reference from your most recent employer (and your partner's employer if applicable) plus additional references from any previous employer, or in relation to any voluntary work, where you had contact with children.
- > Interviewing two personal references who must have known you for at least two years or more, as well as a family member for each fostering applicant.
- > Interviews with birth children you may have had, (dependent on their age)
- > Interviews with any significant ex-partners or people with whom you have had a relationship involving children. We will discuss this with you during your initial visit.



## Fostering Panel

The Supervising Social Worker will complete an assessment report following the home visits and checks and they will then make recommendations to the Fostering Panel. The report will be shared with you before the Fostering Panel meets to make sure it is accurate and fair. It is a requirement that you attend the Fostering Panel. This is made up of foster carers, social workers and other related professionals who will consider your application and make their recommendation to Trafford's agency decision maker. On reading the papers

that are submitted to the panel, the agency decision maker will then decide whether to uphold the recommendation from the panel. Once the agency decision maker has decided to approve, you are then registered as a foster carer for Trafford Council.

As an approved Trafford foster carer you will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who will visit you on a regular basis to provide support, advice and supervision.

# What do Foster Carers do?



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## You don't have to be superhuman!

Foster carers come from all walks of life; we are looking for ordinary people who can do an extraordinary job.

You do need to enjoy being with children and young people, be patient, understanding and tolerant with plenty of energy... you'll almost certainly need a sense of humour too. You don't need to be married, have children of your own or any direct previous experience but you will need room in your home for a foster child to have their own space.



We need flexible and reliable people who are up for a new challenge with the capacity and personal qualities to look after a child. We need carers who can take and collect the child or young person to contact sessions with their birth family and attend review meetings with other professionals within the Children, Families and Wellbeing Service. We also need carers who reflect children's ethnicity and can promote their religious and cultural heritage. As the effects of passive smoking are potentially more serious for younger children, new foster carers will not be approved to care for children under five years of age, if they or other household members smoke.

**We can't promise anyone an easy time but we CAN promise that you will make a real difference in a child's life.**



# Types of Foster Carers

## Emergency carer

These foster carers play an important role in emergency situations, where a child or young person needs to be looked after at short notice, usually late at night over one night, a weekend or bank holiday weekend.

## Short Term carer

This can be anything from a few days to a few months or longer. Carers provide a temporary place to stay until the child can return home to their own family or a longer-term fostering placement or adoption arrangement can be made.



## Long Term/Permanent carer

This is planned very carefully with the focus on the child or young person's long term future. This allows children and young people to stay in a family where they can feel secure, while maintaining contact with their birth family.

## Short Break carer

Usually for when a child or young person's full time foster carer requests a weekend or holiday break. The child or young person could be with you for a weekend or a couple of weeks. This service is available mainly for our foster carers with older children.

## Home from Home carers

These carers offer regular short break care to children with additional and complex needs.

## Me2 carers

These carers offer specialised treatment placements for children and young people aged 11-17 years who have complex needs. They may already be in the care system or would be placed by courts as an alternative to custody. As a Me2 Foster Carer you will receive a professional fee plus an age related allowance for a young person who is placed with you.

## Supported Lodgings providers

Although not foster carers, Supported Lodgings providers offer safe, secure and supportive accommodation in their home to young people aged between 16-21 years to enable them to develop self-confidence along with life skills, such as looking after their own health, budgeting, completing domestic tasks and managing social relationships.

## Parent and Baby Placements

Specially trained foster carers who will take a young parent and their baby into their home, providing them with care and support and teaching them how to care for their baby.

## Remand foster carers

This type of carer looks after young people who have been remanded into the care of the Local Authority by the Criminal Courts as an alternative to a prison remand. Placements often last for a minimum of eight days and are typically required at very short notice. Many young people remain remanded whilst the Court is considering their case but this is usually a maximum of three months.

# Who are the Children and Young People who need Foster Carers?



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Children and young people who need foster carers vary in age from babies to teenagers; they have a variety of needs.

Children and young people can be in care for all sorts of reasons; their parents may have mental health problems or issues concerning drugs and alcohol misuse. There may be violence in the family and children could have been hurt or abused.

Many of the children and young people have been through difficult and distressing experiences and may find it difficult to trust adults. They will need your time and support in adjusting to ordinary family life. We particularly need foster carers who could look after teenagers or family groups of brothers and sisters.

**All children and young people are different but all need security, stability and the chance to develop their true potential.**



## Parent and Baby

Some young parents need support and security at what can be a very vulnerable time in their lives. They need to adjust to being a parent and learn to take on board their new and sometimes scary responsibilities.

This can be achieved with encouragement and gentle guidance from a foster carer, alongside the other professionals supporting the parent and baby. They are facing a life changing experience and a foster carer can help them recognise the skills needed to manage their lives.

If you have the time and patience to help a young parent and their baby, then please contact us.



## Teenagers

We want people who can offer a home to teenagers when they need it most. It could be just for a short time while we help to work through a particular problem; they may need support to move back home or on to another foster carer. Some teenagers do need a long-term placement and foster carers to help them to prepare for adult life and independence.

Teenagers in care need foster carers who have patience. They need the ability to listen, to hear the young person and also to help them make sense of their situation. Carers need to be able to set clear, fair and consistent boundaries and help young people believe in themselves, and help them reach their full potential. If you've got 'stickability' and you're able to build trust, offer stability and see the positives in young people we would be delighted to hear from you.



## Brothers and Sisters (Sibling Groups)

There are not enough foster carers to care for sibling groups. Sometimes it is necessary to separate brothers and sisters but in the vast majority of cases all efforts are made to keep siblings together. Moving into care is disruptive and unsettling. Children and young people have to adjust to so many changes. Often the comfort and familiarity of brothers and sisters can help with this adjustment. Separating brothers and sisters in care can have a long-term impact on their health and wellbeing, and also on their sense of identity. When children are separated from their brothers and sisters it can bring

about feelings of abandonment and rejection which in turn can lead to lower self-esteem and a greater possibility of mental health problems later on in life. Research into the views of children and young people with experience of care has found that relationships with brothers and sisters are often what they value most in family life, sometimes more than any other family relationship. If you are interested in helping children to build positive lifelong relationships with their siblings and have the space to offer a placement for a sibling group it would be great to hear from you.

# Me2 Fostering

## How does the Me2 Programme work?

**Me2 is the name of Trafford Council's Multi Dimensional Treatment Foster Care scheme which is a specialist treatment programme.**

This highly successful scheme was developed by the Oregon Social Learning Centre in America and has helped to turn around the lives of troubled children and young people for over 30 years.

Me2 works with a small number of motivated young people aged 11-17 years who have been assessed as appropriate for the programme. Every young person who enters the Me2 programme will want to change their behaviour and be willing to learn new skills. They will be supported by a multidisciplinary team and most importantly, their Foster Carer who will play a crucial role by working with the team to support the young person to learn and develop new skills and providing a secure home for them to live in whilst they go through the programme.

Children and young people are accepted onto the Me2 programme through two distinct routes. This may either be as an alternative to custody, known as Intensive Fostering, where young people are placed with Me2 foster carers by the courts as part of an order; or via social worker referral for children who are already in care and would benefit from the structured approach provided by Me2.



### The Me2 programme will succeed by:

- > Providing high levels of support via an individually designed programme where young people are awarded points to encourage the targeted behaviour in the placement, school and community.
- > Teaching social skills that reinforce appropriate behaviour, promote new ways of behaving and discourage challenging behaviour.
- > Encouraging young people to earn privileges as they progress through three levels of the programme between a period of 9 – 12 months.
- > Providing young people with the support of our multidisciplinary team as well as their own Social Worker and a number of other professionals.
- > Supporting our Foster Carers by providing 24/7 on-call telephone support, training and weekly meetings.



## What Training and Support is available?

As a Me2 Foster Carer you will receive a professional fee plus an age related allowance for a young person who is placed with you. Your income is subject to income tax but there are tax concessions available to foster carers which may considerably reduce your liability to tax

Whilst you'll be responsible for providing fully comprehensive car insurance as well as property and household contents insurance, you may also wish to consider providing provision for a personal pension and ill health/sickness incapacity.



In return for your commitment you'll also receive:

- > Training from the Me2 Clinical Team before a child is placed, plus access to a diverse training programme once you become an approved carer.
- > Support from the Programme Supervisor in applying the programme for the young person in your care as well as regular feedback on the progress made.
- > 24-hour, 7 days a week on-call telephone support provided by the dedicated and experienced Me2 team.
- > Weekly foster carer meetings to share successes and challenges with other Me2 Foster Carers. Information from this meeting will be fed into the clinical meeting where the young person's programme is drawn up.
- > Regular planned breaks from caring plus 28 days holiday a year (the young person will stay with another Me2 Foster Carer during this time).

\*The professional fee and age related allowance is subject to annual review

# Who can become a Me2 Foster Carer?

## You can become a Me2 Foster Carer if you:

- > Live in or within a short travelling distance of Trafford.
- > Have a spare bedroom.
- > Are prepared to be at home on a full-time basis (if you're a couple only one of you needs to do this).
- > Do not have any children under 18 years old living in your home
- > Are interested in supporting young people with complex needs and providing structured supervision.
- > Have a positive network of friends and family to support you.
- > Are willing to work as part of a team.
- > Enjoy the company of children and young people.

## Whilst you don't need any formal qualifications, you'll have:

- > Some experience of living or working with young people and a good understanding of child development.
- > A positive approach towards young people and their families.
- > The ability to work closely with the team, apply a young person's individual programme and contribute to training and support group meetings.
- > A readiness to learn and accept support from the team.
- > The ability to respond immediately, calmly and appropriately to challenging behaviour from a young person.
- > A willingness to promote new opportunities to help the children and young people achieve their potential.
- > Resilience, a good sense of humour, the ability to keep things in perspective and the determination to never give up!



# Who is in the Me2 Team?

**Our Clinical Team works closely with young people and their foster carers to manage and co-ordinate the individual programmes.**

By working together and planning every aspect of a young person's life at home, school, their free time and contact time with birth families, the young person is more likely to succeed in completing the programme and improving their social skills, behaviour, emotional well-being and educational attainment.

The Me2 Team comprises of:-

## **Foster Carers**

Specialised and dedicated carers who are trained in the implementation of the Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care model and participate in ongoing professional development as well as providing a nurturing home.

## **Project Manager**

Administers and ensures the smooth running of the project.

## **Programme Supervisor**

Psychologist responsible for designing and implementing the individual treatment programmes based on each young person's needs.

## **Foster Carer Recruiter**

The social worker who is responsible for the recruitment, assessment, training and support of the foster carers.



## **Individual Therapist**

Focuses on specific issues, providing therapy for children and young people that increases coping strategies and helps them to understand their feelings.

## **Skills Trainer**

Practices the appropriate behaviour with the young person by teaching new skills in the community.

## **Birth Family Therapist**

Engages and works with the extended family and other key people regarding their relationships with the young person involved and associated issues.

## **Education Worker**

Promotes integration to school and supports a young person's learning and confidence.

## **Administrator/PDR Caller**

Collates daily information from carers on the young person and provides administrative support to ensure the smooth running of the team.

# Supported Lodgings Scheme

Trafford Supported Lodgings Scheme is part of Trafford's Children, Families and Wellbeing Service.



The scheme recruits 'Supported Lodging Providers' who can provide safe, secure and supportive accommodation in their home to young people aged 16-21. The young people may be in supported lodgings for various reasons, for example: leaving care, family breakdown, bereavement or risk of harm – but all require emotional and practical guidance in order to develop the skills and confidence to live independently.

What you will receive as a Supported Lodgings Provider:

- > Ongoing support and supervision from the Supported Lodgings Coordinators
- > Comprehensive ongoing training
- > Financial assistance in the form of regular payments

## Remand Supported Lodgings

Trafford Council is also recruiting Supported Lodgings providers who are able to provide a home for young people who require placements because they are subject to a community remand order. These providers would look after young people who have been remanded into the care of the Local Authority by the Criminal Courts as an alternative to a prison remand. Placements often last for a minimum of eight days and are typically required at very short notice. Many young people remain remanded whilst the Court is considering their case but this is usually for a maximum of three months. An enhanced fee is paid during this placement as it is expected the provider would not work during this period due to the high level of supervision required.





# I am interested. What should I do next?

Anyone interested in applying to become a Supported Lodgings Provider is vetted and assessed to ensure that they can offer a safe and supportive environment to a vulnerable young person.

Please contact Trafford Council's Fostering Recruitment Officer who will be happy to put you in touch with a member of the Supported Lodgings team who can explain the scheme to you in more detail.

## Do I need any special skills or qualities?

Supported Lodging Providers should be able to:

- > Get on with teenagers and enjoy their company
- > Provide a clean, comfortable room within a safe and secure home
- > Be warm, caring and patient
- > Have a non-judgemental attitude
- > Be adaptable to the needs of individual young people
- > Want to help a young person succeed



# Home From Home

Short breaks for Children with complex and additional needs



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## What is Home from Home?

Home from Home carers support disabled children and their families by welcoming a child into their home to give the child and the family a short break. The child has the opportunity to have new experiences outside of the family home and make new friends by maybe going to the carers' local park, going swimming, painting, shopping, making a cake or playing on the computer.

## How does it work?

Home from Home carers look after disabled children of all ages and from all religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They may have a learning disability and/or a physical disability and as with all children will have different personalities and a variety of needs and abilities. Each child is carefully matched with a Foster Carer that can meet his or her needs.

Children's visits can vary depending on the Foster Carer's availability and the child's assessed support package. Children receive support in line with their needs as assessed by their Social Worker. A child attending Home from Home requires an allocated Social Worker from the Complex and Additional Needs Team.

To receive support from this service a person or carer can refer to the Multi Agency and Referral Team on 0161 912 5125 to request an assessment for the service.





## Who can Apply?

Single people, couples and families from all backgrounds may be assessed to become carers. We are looking for flexible and reliable people with the capacity and personal qualities to care for a disabled child. You do not need to have looked after a disabled child before. You do not need qualifications or experience; just energy and commitment and a desire to support a disabled child in the community.

### Initial Training

You will be asked to attend some training sessions (usually spread out over four evenings). These sessions help to clarify what is expected of you and will also give you the opportunity to decide whether or not you wish to proceed. These groups provide thorough preparation for becoming a Home from Home carer and most people find them enjoyable as well as informative. The training will include the chance to meet existing carers and parents or children who access the service.

### Home Assessment

If you wish to continue after the training, a supervising social worker will undertake an assessment of your suitability as a home from home carer. The assessment will take a number of weeks to complete and will give us the opportunity to not only get to know you, but also help us to consider matching you with a suitable child.

**If you are interested in finding out more about this rewarding role please contact the Fostering Recruitment Officer who will put you in touch with a member of the Home from Home team.**



# Our Diversity Statement

Trafford's Children, Families and Wellbeing Service is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity in all of our day to day working practices.



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The Equality Duty has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- > eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- > advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- > foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

We will not tolerate discrimination and provide equality of opportunity with all children and young people and foster families.

We are looking for foster carers with the diverse range of ages, skills and backgrounds needed to care for the equally diverse range of children and young people needing placements.

Foster carer training emphasises the importance of providing care which respects and preserves the unique cultural heritage of each child/young person. The training also highlights the importance of understanding and supporting needs related to a child/young person's ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability and linguistic background. Foster carers are provided with the necessary information, support and training to enable them to provide the best possible care and to promote the heritage of a fostered child or young person.



# The Trafford Children in Care Service Vision

We want every child in the care of Trafford and every care leaver to reach their full potential: they have the right to be healthy, happy safe and secure, and to feel loved, valued and respected



## The Trafford Children in Care Service Principles

- > Provide a stable and supportive home with caring, consistent relationships
- > Listen and respond to children's views, wishes and feelings and consult with them about the development of services
- > Place children within families whenever possible and as close to the child's community as possible
- > Respect and promote children's rights
- > Take a whole council approach to the care and support we provide to children in care and care leavers
- > Safeguard the welfare, health and happiness of all children in care and care leavers
- > Have high aspirations for each child
- > Respect and value diversity
- > Promote contact with family and friends
- > Ensure that children in care are given the opportunity to leave care only when they are ready and equipped to do so
- > Support and prepare care leavers to make an effective transition to independent living
- > Make decisions based on assessment of need
- > Celebrate children's achievements



*From being full of uncertainty, having a lack of care and food, experiencing fear and no expectation for my future, which was so scary, my life became a life when I went to live with my foster family.*

*All of a sudden there was love, hope, belonging, safety and excitement for succeeding and I now have the certainty that if I fall at any hurdles someone will be there to catch me and tell me to carry on.*

**Quote from a young person in foster care**

## Contact us:

**By phone**

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