



Foster with Slough

A guide to fostering



Hello!

Thank you for showing an interest in becoming one of our foster carers.

At Foster with Slough (Slough Children First's Independent Fostering Agency (IFA), we have children of all ages and various backgrounds who need short or longer-term care. Becoming a foster carer is one of the most rewarding roles you'll ever have. Watching a child – who may previously have been living with uncertainty or instability – grow and flourish under your care is beyond words.

Offering them a loving and stable home makes you – in our eyes – a very special person or family, and we hope you decide to join our fostering 'family'.

This guide has a wealth of information about becoming a foster carer. It walks you through the process and addresses many of the questions you may have. If you have queries that aren't covered here, rest assured that our friendly and supportive fostering team is always ready to assist you. We are here to support you every step of the way, ensuring you feel confident and prepared for this rewarding Journey.

Best wishes,



Saima Arif - Head of
Regulated Services,
Slough Children First



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What is fostering?

Fostering is providing care to a child or young person when they are unable to stay with their family because of challenges such as:

- Neglect
- Family breakdown
- Parents needing help due to illness
- Drug or alcohol problems in the family
- Domestic violence and abuse
- Physical, sexual, emotional abuse
- The young person is an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker

Part of that care is to place these children with foster families who can provide them with the love and support they need and at Foster with

Slough, our vision is for children and young people to be Happy, Safe & Loved, Thriving.

Foster families welcome children into their homes and families, either on a short-term or long-term (permanent) basis, providing them with stability and a sense of belonging.

Many different people become foster carers, and foster families come from various backgrounds and circumstances.

Some families have a mum and a dad, and some families have a mum or a dad. Some families have two mums or two dads. There is no such thing as a typical foster family, as everyone is unique.



"My carers are kind, and they look after me."

Child in our care

Types of fostering

There are several different types of fostering placements – some you may be suited to more than others because of your personal/professional circumstances.

Emergency foster care – providing a home to a child at very short notice, so families need to be prepared to take a child into their home at any time of day or night and have them stay for a few days.

Short-term foster care can be planned, but it could also be with limited notice and provide a temporary place to stay until the child can return home to their own family or a longer-term arrangement can be made.

Long-term or permanent fostering allows

children/ young people to stay with a family until they reach adulthood if they cannot return to live with their birth family.

It follows a matching process, including introductions, so the child and the foster family can gradually get to know each other before the child moves in.

This type of fostering can suit families who prefer longer-term arrangements and fewer changes to foster placements. It provides stability to that child or young person and enables them to develop a sense of belonging.

Home from Home involves caring for someone else's child/ young person with a disability.



This is part time and could be for a few hours a week during the day or an evening on a regular basis or during the evening or school holidays. It is a way to provide respite for the child and family.

Remand foster care provides a young person with a home when they have been remanded into the community (rather than custody) and have to live away from their family while their case is resolved through the courts. It can be for anything from a few nights to a few months, depending on how long the process takes, and often at short notice.

Therapeutic Led Care (TLC) fostering – a type of foster care for children and young people aged 5-16 who currently live in residential care,

or who without this provision would likely be placed in a residential home. It involves supporting children/ young people who may have experienced significant neglect, trauma and or abuse prior to being placed in care.





About Foster with Slough

Foster with Slough is Slough Children's First's Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).

Slough Children First is wholly-owned by Slough Borough Council and provides social care and support services to children, young people and families.

We work closely with Slough Borough Council and partner agencies to make sure that every service working with vulnerable children and families is linked, is better and that we work effectively and efficiently, together. We are also proud to be partnered with 19 other local councils (as of July 2024) as part of a new regional fostering recruitment hub – Local Authority Fostering South East.

How long will it take to become a foster carer?

There are a number of checks and an assessment that needs to be carried out before we can place a child in your care, as well as training to prepare you for becoming a foster carer.

We do, of course, aim to get these undertaken in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

The whole process can take 4-6 months from when we receive your application. You can find out more about the application process and what it covers on pages 14-19.



Are foster carers paid?

Of course. As a foster carer you receive a weekly allowance to cover the cost of caring for a child.

This allowance is based on the child or young person's age and covers essential needs such as food, clothing, pocket money, heating, utilities, telephone calls, entertainment, leisure, and other day-to-day expenses. This ensures that you can focus on providing a nurturing environment for the child. In addition to this, you will also receive a fostering fee in recognition of your skills.

The table below shows the allowances and fees (correct as of April 2026). There are different levels of carer fee (known as tiers) which reflect the skills and experience of a foster carer. Additionally, there are different child allowance rates according to the age of the child or young person in your care.

Child's age	Carer fee (tier 1)	Carer fee (tier 2)	Carer fee (tier 3)	Child's allowance	TLC fostering allowance
0-2	£200	£230	£300	£195	£1000
3-4	£200	£230	£300	£203	£1000
5-10	£200	£230	£300	£223	£1000
11-15	£200	£230	£300	£255	£1000
16-17	£200	£230	£300	£298	£1000



Depending on the complexity of the needs of the child, you may be eligible for £50 - £100 or more per week, subject to the recommendation of a child complexity assessment.

You will receive up to two weeks of holiday pay in a calendar year and £100 festival allowance.

You will also receive a £50 birthday allowance for each child, an emergency clothing allowance of up to £100 for a new child, and a setting up allowance of up to £500 when you are approved as a foster carer.

Embarking on a career as a professional foster carer offers numerous avenues for personal and professional growth and holds the potential for exciting career progression.

This potential can be explored and discussed during your assessment, offering you a fulfilling and rewarding journey.

Each year, after a successful annual review, we celebrate your success with a £200 'thank you'.





Why Foster with Slough?

Our policy is to try to place children locally before considering families further afield so that children maintain links that are important to them. If a child is placed further away, we do all we can to maintain local links and to include children in all our celebrations, events and consultations.

Unlike many fostering agencies, Foster with Slough is smaller and more relational. Because of this, there is a real sense of a family feel.

As a foster family, our IFA, can offer you other benefits too, including:

- Our foster carers can access both the fostering team and the child's Social Worker in the same location, making decision-making and communication much faster and easier;
- You will be helping local children remain near their family and friends;
- Excellent supervision and local support;
- Regular support groups, social events and newsletters to keep you informed;
- Organised peer-to-peer support through the Slough Fostering Association (drop-in coffee mornings, social activities, fundraising events);
- You can be a part of new innovations to support and receive help when needed via our Mockingbird family – an innovative method of delivering foster care which uses



an extended family model;

- Generous mileage allowance;
- Out of hours support;
- Access and resources to our Virtual School – <https://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/what-we-do/virtual-school>;
- A programme of regular training events as well as financial incentives for completing training helps you progress your career as a foster carer;
- An annual awards event for our foster carers is held to recognise their contribution to Slough's children and young people;
- Fees are paid for an annual subscription

to the Fostering Network, which includes, among other things, a subscription to the magazine, regular e-newsletters, access to online resources, 24 hour dedicated helplines and a multitude of discounts on various activities and days out, as well as special members' prices for training, publications and events;

- Holiday and birthday additional payments for all children in your care;
- Additional therapeutic support for children requiring extra help.

*"We have a
supportive team."
Foster carer*







The process

Preparing you to foster

Once you have received your information pack, we will contact you to arrange an Initial Home Visit.

A representative from our recruitment team will arrange to meet you to discuss in more detail the process, and to find out basic information about you, your family and your home.

In Slough, we value our foster families' involvement and believe it is important for potential foster families to have the chance to talk to our existing families. Throughout the recruitment and assessment process we aim to give you opportunities to meet other foster families who can offer you support and enable

you to learn about their experience of fostering with our IFA.

The Social Worker who completes your initial home visit report will keep in contact with you during the initial stage to ensure you are fully supported and answers any questions you have.

Application

If we decide that becoming a foster family is right for you, you must complete an application form.

Fostering involves the whole family, so if you have a partner, they will also need to be part of the application process.

Skills to Foster training



You will be invited to attend a Skills to Foster preparation training course.

This course allows you to learn more about fostering and is a compulsory part of your journey.

You will learn about why children need to be looked after, how to help children manage their feelings and behaviours, the roles of the staff in helping you and the child while placed with you and the support we provide to you as a foster family.

The courses are run face to face at one of our sites in Slough and take place over six sessions.

If you have a partner, you must both attend. We also have regular events for the children within

foster families (called Kids Care 2!) so they can meet other children in fostering households.

Checks

The safety and security of our children is our top priority, and by law, we have to undertake rigorous checks on all people in the household. Early in the process (stage 1), we will carry out Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) and local authority checks. Education checks will be carried out on any children in the household, and we will also ask you to provide employment, medical and personal references.

All of these checks may seem daunting, but we will guide you every step of the way to ensure the process runs as smoothly as possible.



The Assessment

You will be assigned a Social Worker who will carry out an assessment with you and other members of your household.

The assessment involves several home visits and is designed to help identify your strengths and skills. They will also look at any areas where we might need to offer extra support to help you with your fostering journey. You will also be allocated an experienced foster carer as your buddy.

This part of the process usually takes around four months as we get to know you better. Everything needs to be explored in depth with you as we need to get it right for the children

you will care for and for your family.

Fostering panel

Once all the information has been gathered from the home visits and the checks, a report (Form F) will be written by the Social Worker.

This is shared with you to ensure accuracy, and then it is presented to the fostering panel which recommends approvals.

You will be invited to attend the fostering panel meeting where a recommendation about your suitability will be made. The decision maker will then formally approve your suitability to foster within 7 working days.

You will be notified of the decision verbally



within 2 working days and a written confirmation will be sent to you within 5 working days.

Once approved, you will be registered as a foster carer with Foster with Slough, and you can look forward to the placement of your first child(ren).

Training and support

As a foster family, you would be part of a team supporting the child in your care. As such, we can offer a comprehensive training programme to enable you to undertake your role and develop your career as a foster carer.

We also offer ongoing training opportunities such as therapeutic training to help you develop your skills in understanding children,

attachment, first aid, promoting contact, safeguarding and trauma.

As well as this, you can take part in training alongside other professionals too.

Training, Support and Development Standards

We will help you to meet the 'Training, Support and Development, (TSD) Standards, which all foster carers in the country must work towards and complete in their first year of fostering.

Your supervision

You will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker (SSW) who will meet with you and your family regularly and provide advice, guidance,



supervision and ongoing support.

24 hours support

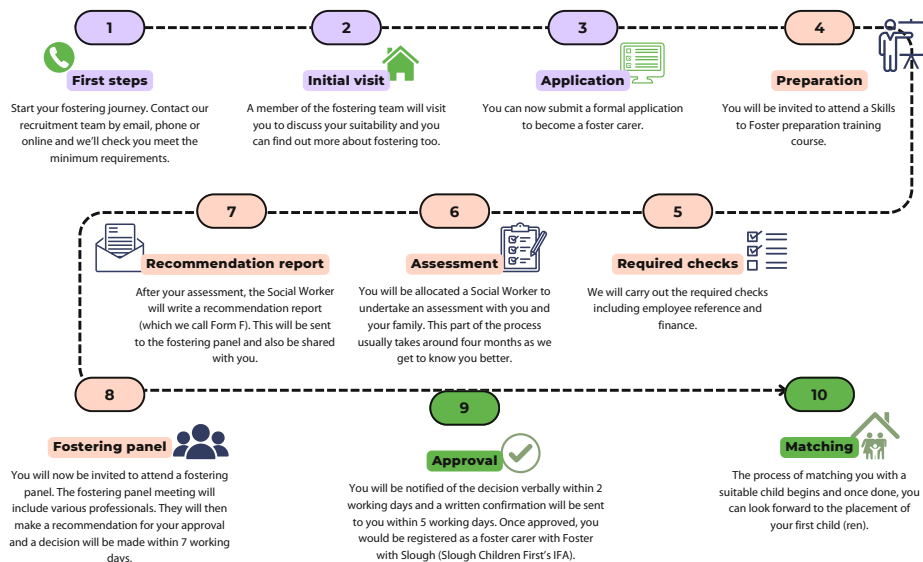
The fostering team operates a duty desk, which you can call if your SSW is not available.

Outside office hours, you can telephone our out of hours fostering line on 01344 351 999.

We also run regular support groups for all of our foster families, which enables mutual support and advice to be shared.



Fostering application process





Frequently asked questions

What is the role of the foster family?

- To provide a caring, secure family environment;
- To meet the child's day to day individual needs;
- To promote contact for the child with their family wherever possible;
- To work alongside Slough Children First's children social care teams and its partner agencies
- To help prepare a child to move back to their family or onto a new permanent placement through long-term fostering or adoption;
- To facilitate school runs and support a child in education.





What is the difference between fostering and adoption?

Fostering is looking after a child temporarily (from a few days to years).

When you adopt a child, you will become the child's legal parent and they will become a permanent member of your family.

Why do some children need to be fostered?

There are a number of reasons why children can't be cared for in their own family and may need to be fostered.

Children may have suffered abuse; they may have been neglected, or their parents may have experienced problems, making it difficult for them to care for their children. The need for

fostering could be a temporary crisis, or it may be that longer-term care is needed.

It is important that a foster family is available nearby that can provide children with the care that they need. Many children will return to their own families but for some children, permanent alternative care must be found. For many of these children, the opportunity to live in a family environment is the best option.

Contact between children, their parents and other family members is usually maintained while the child is in foster care and foster families often have a role in supporting these meetings, by transporting them and supporting them before and after birth family contact.



Can I foster if I am lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?

You absolutely can!

One of the biggest myths in fostering is that your gender or sexuality determines if you can or can't foster. However, your gender or sexual preferences will not affect your eligibility to foster in any way.

Can I foster if I am single?

Of course you can!

It doesn't matter if you are single, married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner, however, a good support network of family or close friends is essential for all applicants.

Can I foster if don't have children?

Yes, you can!

The important thing is that you can offer support, guidance and a positive, caring family environment to help children feel secure and valued.

Having relevant childcare experience / an understanding of children's needs will be a big help.

There will be challenges, but with support and advice from our foster care service, other foster families, and professionals, you will meet these challenges and gain tremendous satisfaction from having been an important part of a child's life.





Can I foster if I am a man?

Absolutely!

Your gender or sexuality does not determine if you can or can't foster. We also have a support group specifically for male foster carers.

Can I foster if I practice a religion?

Of course – you can foster whether you are or aren't religious but it is important to be aware of the child's religious beliefs.

Do I need a qualification to foster?

No formal qualifications are necessary, but foster carers will need to have experience caring for their own or other people's children or have relevant professional experience.

We offer training and support to enhance your skills as well as provide you with an opportunity to develop new ones. What matters most is that you have the time, space, commitment, patience, energy and, above all, the desire to care and work with both children and the parents.

Do you recruit foster families from all ethnicities?

Yes we do!

We believe it is best for children to live with foster families who reflect and understand a child's heritage, ethnic origin, culture and language, so we need families from all types of backgrounds.

Ultimately, we are looking for families who can



offer support, guidance and a positive family environment in which children feel secure, cared for and valued. We encourage enquiries from all ethnic groups to ensure we can complement and promote a child's ethnicity and cultural heritage.

What age do I have to be to foster?

Foster carers must be a minimum of 21 years old to apply. While there are no upper age limits for fostering, a foster carer must be fit enough to meet the needs of the child.

Can I foster if I live in rented accommodation?

You will need to have a spare bedroom if you wish to foster children above the age of 2, but you do not need to own your house. You could

be a baby carer if you do not have a spare room.

Your home must meet health and safety regulations and the national minimum fostering standards in terms of hygiene, play and homework space. This will be assessed during the assessment process.

Can I foster if I smoke?

We will not place a child under 5 in a household where adults smoke.

We would not refuse enquiries from people who smoke, but we would strongly encourage anyone who does smoke to take active steps to give up, as this is likely to benefit you and any children in your care.

Is fostering considered a job?



All foster carers are registered and considered as individuals who work as part of a team around a child. We prefer to talk about it in terms of a 'family-based role' rather than a traditional job.

Can I foster and still work?

Yes you can, provided your work is flexible. If you are a couple, one or both of the partners' jobs must be flexible for managing school runs and professional meetings and you must be available for the child's health appointments, leisure activities, school holidays, etc.

We also have a 'Home from Home' scheme, which involves caring for a child with a disability. This could be for a few hours a week (day time only) on a regular basis. You'll have to undertake our usual application process, vetting and

training. Being able to help out in this way can be very rewarding in terms of support for the child's primary carer.

Is there a particular need to foster in Slough?

We are looking for families for children aged 0-18 from a range of ethnic backgrounds and are particularly looking for foster carers to look after school-age children, teenagers, siblings and children with special needs and disabilities.

We are particularly interested in hearing from you if you can offer a home to a child or siblings over the age of 10 or can offer parent and child fostering placements. We are actively recruiting foster families who want to commit to caring for a child on a longer-term basis, e.g. from 10-18 years of age.



"I am a Slough woman
changing Slough's
children's and families lives.
My fellow foster carers
inspire me daily to do my
best for my foster family."



Contact us

There are many ways you can get in contact with us.
You can reach out to us by:

Telephone – 0300 131 2797

Email address – info@lafosteringse.org.uk

Website – <https://www.fosterwithslough.co.uk>

If you would like to request this guide in another language or format, please get in touch with us.





Useful contacts – support networks

Gov.uk – Becoming a foster carer

<https://www.gov.uk/becoming-foster-parent>

The Fostering Network – The UK's leading fostering charity

<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk>

Fosterline – Your fostering advice service

<http://www.fosterline.info/>

New Family Social – Supporting LGBTQ+ adoptive and foster families

<https://newfamilysocial.org.uk>

FosterTalk – Provides training and support services to foster carers

<https://fostertalk.org>





Notes

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Notes

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If you would like to request this guide in another language or format, please get in touch with us.

إذا كنت ترغب في طلب هذا الدليل بلغة أو تنسيق آخر ، فيرجى الاتصال بنا.

اگر می خواهید این رهنمود را به زبان یا فارمت دیگری درخواست کنید، لطفاً با ما تماس بگیرید

यदि आप इस गाइड को किसी अन्य भाषा या प्रारूप में अनुरोध करना चाहते हैं, तो कृपया हमसे संपर्क करें।

Jeśli chce Pan/Pani zamówić ten przewodnik w innym języku lub formacie, prosimy o skontaktowanie się z nami.

Se desejar solicitar este guia em outro idioma ou formato, entre em contato conosco.

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਗਾਈਡ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਜਾਂ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿੱਚ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Dacă doriți să primiți acest ghid în Românește sau alt format, vă rugăm să luați legătura cu noi.

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اگر آپ اس گائیڈ کو کسی اور زبان یا فارمیٹ میں درخواست کرنا چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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A Slough Children First Independent Fostering Agency
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Registered in England & Wales: 9487106

Find out more about us:

Website: www.fosterwithslough.co.uk

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

Instagram: [sloughchildrenfirst](https://www.instagram.com/sloughchildrenfirst)