

**Join the  
FOSTERING  
family**



# **Guide to Fostering in Greater Manchester**

**Creating a healthy,  
safe, warm space for  
everyone to call home.**



**Funded by  
UK Government**

# **Together we are Greater Manchester**

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Stockport  
Tameside  
Trafford  
Wigan**

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## Get in touch for more information



0300 303 0321



enquire@fosterforgm.com



fosterforgm.com



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# Got room in your heart and your home?



If you're over 21, have patience and a kind heart, **you've already got what it takes to make all the difference to a child's life** in Greater Manchester.

**Curious? Learn more at: [fosterforgm.com](https://fosterforgm.com)**





# What is fostering?

**Foster carers welcome children and young people into their homes when they are not able to live with their own family, a close relative or family friend. During that time, foster carers offer love, time, space, stability, safety and support.**

Foster carers look after children in their home and take care of their emotional wellbeing and practical day-to-day needs. This may include school drop-offs and pick-ups, preparing meals and working with schools to support their learning. They nurture trusting relationships and provide emotional support and guidance.

Fostering is a professional role with responsibilities. To support this, foster carers receive training and support as well as a regular tax-free financial allowance, plus additional payments and benefits for each child in their care. The amount received depends on the foster carer's experience, the type of fostering and the age of the child.

Fostering a child is a highly rewarding experience that offers the chance to make a positive difference to a local child's or young person's life.



## Cared for children

**When a child or young person is not able to live with their own family, a close relative or family friend, they come into the care of their local council. A child can only be taken into care if they are under 18. These children can be babies, toddlers, older children, or teenagers.**

Children and young people who come into the care of a local council do so because of a 'care order', or when the birth parents agree for their child to be cared for.

A care order is given by a court. It allows a local council to take a child into their care. Under the Children Act 1989, a local council can apply for a care order if it believes a child is suffering from any form of neglect or at risk of significant harm. The court decides if the child can be taken into care. Care orders last until:

- The child's 18th birthday.
- An order is made giving parental responsibility to another person - for example, through adoption or special guardianship.
- The court lifts the order.





If a child is taken into care, their birth parents will continue to hold some parental responsibility for their child. They will, however, share this responsibility with the local council who will make most of the important decisions about the child's upbringing and welfare, including:

- Who will look after the child.
- Where the child will live.
- How the child will be educated.

The local council is responsible for:

- Making sure that an appropriate standard of care is provided for the child.
- Making sure that only suitable people are approved to look after the child.
- Providing training and support for foster carers.

- Listening to the child's and parent's views about care arrangements, taking their religion, race, culture and background into account.
- Making sure the child has someone independent to talk to and knows how to raise a complaint if necessary.

The child may be cared for by:

- A kinship foster carer (also known as a family and friends carer). This occurs when the local council has officially asked a relative or family friend to look after a child who cannot be cared for by their birth parents. Kinship foster carers must be approved as a foster carer.
- A foster carer.
- A children's home.

# Team around the child

**Foster carers are part of what is often termed the ‘team around the child’ who are responsible for the wellbeing and development of a fostered child.**

This team includes the foster carer, their supervising social worker, the child’s birth family and the child’s social worker, as well as several other people, such as education and health professionals, depending on the child’s specific needs.

As well as providing day-to-day care for children and young people, foster carers have a range of responsibilities as a professional carer.

These include:

- Working with the wider team supporting a child, including social workers and their fostering service.
- Keeping records.
- Attending meetings.
- Personal development and training.

In the team around the child, foster carers are often the people who get to know the child best. For this reason, it’s important that foster carers act as advocates for the children in their care, to make sure that all decisions are in their best interests.





# Reasons why a child is fostered

**01**

Death of a parent(s), and where there isn't an appropriate adult to look after their child.

**02**

If a parent(s) has been sentenced to jail and there isn't an appropriate adult to look after their child while they complete their sentence.

**03**

The child is an unaccompanied asylum-seeker.

**04**

The parent(s) has a physical or mental illness that prevents them from providing consistent care for their child.

**05**

The parent(s) is going through a crisis, for example financial issues, eviction or homelessness.

**06**

The home environment is not safe or suitable for a child or young person.

**07**

The child has been neglected (emotional, basic needs or medical neglect).

**08**

The child has been abused (physical, emotional or sexual abuse).

**09**

Close relatives or family friends are not in a position to care for the child.

# What do foster carers do?

**All children and young people need food, clothing, shelter, love and safety, but those in foster care may need additional support due to their life experiences. Whatever the individual circumstances, these children will be experiencing mixed emotions about not being able to live with their parents.**



Foster carers are an important role model, offering love, help and patience. Foster carers need to be sensitive, empathetic, and resilient in their approach to supporting the children and young people they care for.

Foster carers provide...

- a welcoming space.
- a safe and supportive home.
- vital care and stability.
- a nurturing environment.
- emotional support.
- practical assistance, guidance, and encouragement.
- additional support to help a child thrive.

Foster carers help a child...

- adjust to their new environment.
- heal from the trauma they may have experienced.
- maintain their identity through promoting their culture, religion, language and heritage.
- ensure they have a sense of belonging and security throughout their childhood and as they navigate their formative years.
- learn about the importance of positive relationships and trust.
- plan for the future.
- achieve the best they can in their education, social and emotional wellbeing.

Children and young people have different routines based on whether it's a school day, the weekend or the school holidays.

A foster carer's daily activities generally include:

- Keeping a warm, clean and safe home.
- Involving the child in family life.
- Having fun and enjoying time together, ensuring the child has the opportunity to play, relax, and lead a healthy lifestyle.
- Preparing nutritious meals.
- Helping babies and younger children to get washed and dressed or teaching life-skills to older children.
- Dropping off and picking them up from school.
- Helping with homework.
- Taking them to after-school or weekend activities.
- Taking them to medical appointments.

It is important for children and young people in foster care to keep in touch with their own family - mum, dad, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles or grandparents. This is often by phone, video calls and through regular meetups, known as family time. Foster carers therefore play a big part in supporting, promoting and maintaining this positive relationship between the child and their family.

Foster carers receive extensive and ongoing training to help them prepare for and care for the children that come to live with them.





## Types of foster care

There are eight different types of fostering:

1. Short-term
2. Long-term
3. Emergency
4. Short-break
5. Specialist
6. Parent and child
7. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
8. Supported lodgings

### 01

**Short-term foster care** involves temporarily caring for a child until a permanent long-term plan for the child's care is agreed. Short-term foster carers look after children and young people until they can return to their family home or go to live with a close relative or family friend. If that is not possible, short-term foster carers will support the child during their transition to long-term foster care or adoption.



02

**Long-term foster care** (also known as permanence) is where a foster carer agrees to provide stable and ongoing care for a child for a long period, often into adulthood. Long-term fostering is for children and young people who cannot return to their family home, and where adoption is not possible.

03

**Emergency foster care** is when immediate action is required to take care of a child. As such, these instances occur at very short notice, often with only a few hours' warning and at any time of the day or night. Emergency foster carers look after a child on a temporary basis until a care-plan for the child is established.

04

**Short-break foster care** is when a foster carer steps-in and looks after a child for a short period of time, allowing the child's regular foster carer to have a short break and take some planned time out. Short-break foster carers can also provide support to other foster carers who look after children with additional needs.

05

**Specialist foster care** involves caring for children or young people who have additional complex, physical, emotional or educational needs.

06

**Parent and child fostering** is a specialist type of fostering that involves providing care to both a parent and their child who need a safe place to live. The primary focus of this type of foster care is to help the parent and child stay together as a family unit.

07

**Fostering for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children** involves providing a safe and supportive home for children who have arrived in the UK without a parent or guardian. These children, who may speak little or no English, have often fled their home countries due to conflict, natural disasters, persecution or other forms of violence.

08

**Supported lodgings care** involves caring for a young person over the age of 16 as they become an independent adult. Supported lodgings carers pass on important life skills to the young people in their care, such as preparing nutritious meals, budgeting and finances, and managing a home. They can also support young people with their studies, apprenticeships and finding employment.



## Who can foster?

**People of any age, sexuality, gender, marital status, employment status, nationality, ethnicity, religious beliefs, education and social class can become fantastic foster carers.**

**The most important thing is their willingness to provide a safe and loving home for a child or young person.**

Essential criteria that foster carers must meet:

1. Be over the age of 21.
2. Be fit and able to care for children and young people.
3. Either own their own home or be in a secure rental agreement.
4. Provide an environment that is suitable for children and young people.
5. Have a good level of spoken and written English.
6. Disclose any criminal records.



## Why foster?

**Fostering children or young people is a highly rewarding experience that offers the chance to make a positive difference.**

Fostering provides an opportunity to enhance family life and create meaningful relationships with children who need a caring and supportive environment. Whether you're single, married, retired or have a family with children of your own, fostering brings new perspectives and relationships into your home.

Fostering isn't always plain-sailing or without its challenges, but knowing that you're making a difference in a child's life is incredibly fulfilling. As a foster carer, seeing the positive impact of your care on a child's wellbeing and development can be source of immense joy and satisfaction.

# How to become a foster carer

## 01

### Research

Undertaking your own research will help you to gain a good basic understanding of fostering and the process to becoming a foster carer. It's useful that you know what fostering is, who the children are that are fostered, who the team around the child is, why a child is fostered, what foster carers do, the different types of foster care and who can foster.

Our **fosterform.com** website provides all the information you need to get a good overview of what fostering is all about. It provides details around the benefits of fostering for your local council including the financial support you will receive, and the on-going support and training that will be provided. It also provides additional information through blogs and real-life fostering stories.

If there is anything you need clarity on, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate in contacting us on **0300 303 0321**, email us at **enquire@fosterform.com** or complete our online enquiry form.

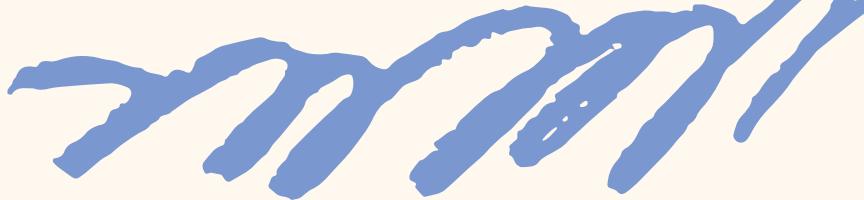
## 02

### Discuss

Fostering is a deeply rewarding experience that can have a life-changing impact on you and your loved ones. It is important that you openly discuss your motivations and reasons for becoming a foster carer. Family members may feel uncertain about fostering or have concerns about the emotional and practical demands. If you have children, they may worry about sharing their space, time, or attention with a foster child.

Building a solid support network helps make the transition to fostering much easier, so your extended family and close friends will also play a role in supporting you throughout the fostering process too. Before moving forward, it's important that anyone that may be directly affected is supportive of your interest in exploring fostering further.



**03**

## Enquire

Once you are ready to start your journey to becoming a foster carer, please get in touch with us.



Phone on  
**0300 303 0321**



Email at  
**enquire@fosterforgm.com**



Enquiry Form at  
**fosterforgm.com**

A committed and friendly member of our Foster for Greater Manchester team will contact you within one working day of your enquiry and will answer any further questions you may have about fostering. They will also explain and guide you through our step-by-step approach in your journey to becoming a foster carer.

**04**

## Initial visit

When you are ready to progress further, a Foster for Greater Manchester recruitment officer and an experienced foster carer (Foster Care Ambassador) will carry out an initial visit at your home to discuss your interest in becoming a foster carer. They will gather preliminary information and provide further guidance about the fostering process. The visit also serves as an opportunity for you to ask questions.

**05**

## Application

If both you and the Foster for Greater Manchester team are happy to proceed, you will be asked to complete an application form providing information on your education, employment, addresses and relationships. You will also need to consent for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and medicals to be carried out. When the application is received, a joint handover visit between the Foster for Greater Manchester team and your local council will be arranged.

**06**

## Checks

Your local council will carry out a few checks with the police and probation service and NSPCC. They will also ask for character references.

**07**

## Skills to Foster training

You don't need any specific qualifications before you begin your journey to fostering. The 'Skills to Foster' training course (page 26) is designed to equip you with the necessary knowledge and skills to become a foster carer. We appreciate that fostering comes with its own set of complexities, and this training will help you navigate these challenges with confidence and resilience.

Additionally, the training offers a valuable opportunity to connect with other foster carer applicants, building a strong support network from the very beginning of your fostering journey. The 'Skills to Foster' training must be completed prior to approval.

**08**

## Assessment

Your local council's fostering team will assess your suitability to become a foster carer. The assessment covers various aspects, including your motivation to foster, parenting abilities, support networks, and understanding of the fostering role. You will be introduced to a fostering social worker who will speak to you, your immediate family and other members of your household about you becoming a foster carer.

**09**

## Panel

Following a successful assessment, your fostering social worker will make a recommendation for your approval to become a foster carer. You will be invited to attend a fostering panel alongside your social worker. The panel members, who have relevant experience in fostering, will review the assessment report prior to the panel.

They will discuss your assessment, ask questions, and provide an informed recommendation regarding your approval. They will also specify the age range and number of children that you will be able to care for.

## 10

## Decision

The panel's recommendation is presented to the Agency Decision Maker, who will review all information and make the final decision about your approval to become a foster carer.

Once approved, you will continue to have access to ongoing advice and guidance through your local council. You'll also be invited to training and support groups, where you can connect with foster carers and truly feel part of our fostering community.





## About Us

**Foster for Greater Manchester is a collaborative partnership between all ten Greater Manchester local councils. Together we are growing the number of foster carers who can provide safe and loving homes for children and young people.**

Foster carers who foster with one of the ten local councils across Greater Manchester support local children and young people, ensuring they stay close to where they're from. This helps minimise disruption to the child's life and allows them to remain at their school, continue their after-school and weekend activities and stay connected with close family and friends. Local councils always endeavour to keep siblings together where possible.



# Why foster with us?

**All ten Greater Manchester local councils provide support and training locally, so foster carers don't have to travel far to access support.**

The foster carer also becomes part of a large local network of foster carers, which offers formal and informal carer support groups to share experiences and help each other.

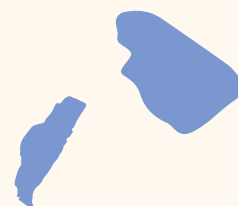
The local council's children's services team has dedicated specialist social workers who know their foster carers, the children in their care, their families, schools, teachers and health professionals.

Thanks to their direct relationship and regular communication with the foster carers, together with their knowledge of the child's story and personal circumstances, social workers can make the best matches between children in their care and available foster carers.

Local councils will always try and match a child with a local council foster carer first. This is because they have recruited, assessed and trained them, and therefore know how they can support the child that needs to be fostered.

As local councils don't have shareholders and don't exist to make a profit, the interests of the children in their care always comes first. This is a big reason why most people choose to foster with their local council.





## Financial support

**Fostering is a professional role with responsibilities. The payment and allowances paid by local councils across Greater Manchester reflect this. Each local council sets its own rates for fees and allowances based on UK government guidelines.**

All foster carers are registered as self-employed with HMRC. Foster carers can continue to work full or part-time as well as being a foster carer. Some people make foster caring their full-time career.

Foster carers receive a fee payment that recognises their role in supporting children across Greater Manchester. Payment is made by the local council they are fostering for.

Foster carers also receive a weekly allowance to help cover the costs associated with caring for a child, for example utility costs, food, clothing, toiletries, entertainment, recreation and pocket money.

The amount that foster carers receive takes into consideration the foster carer's experience, the type of fostering and the age of the child. As a guide, across Greater Manchester's ten local councils, the combined weekly fee and allowance can range from anywhere between £268 and £560 per child.

The fees and allowances are per child. If a foster carer has more than one child in their care at a given time, the fees and allowances will be increased to take into account the number of children being cared for.





All ten local councils provide additional allowances which can be in excess of £2,000 per year, per child. These additional allowances are for:

- Birthdays.
- Holidays.
- Religious festivals.
- Initial clothing.
- School uniform.
- Transport / mileage.

Further allowances are available to cover the cost of purchasing equipment, for example, general health and safety equipment, babies and toddler equipment, car seats, bedroom furnishings and any other specialist equipment that may be required.

Foster carers do not pay tax on the first £19,690 they earn from fostering each year.

On top of the £19,690 exemption, foster carers also get tax relief for every week (or part week) that a child is in their care. For a child under 11 years the tax relief is £415 per child, and £495 for a child over 11 years of age. This means foster carers do not usually pay tax on their earnings from foster care, even if they go over £19,690.

The UK government also gives foster carers National Insurance Credits towards a state pension.

Further information and an illustration of how tax relief works can be found at: [gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/tax-arrangements](https://gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/tax-arrangements)





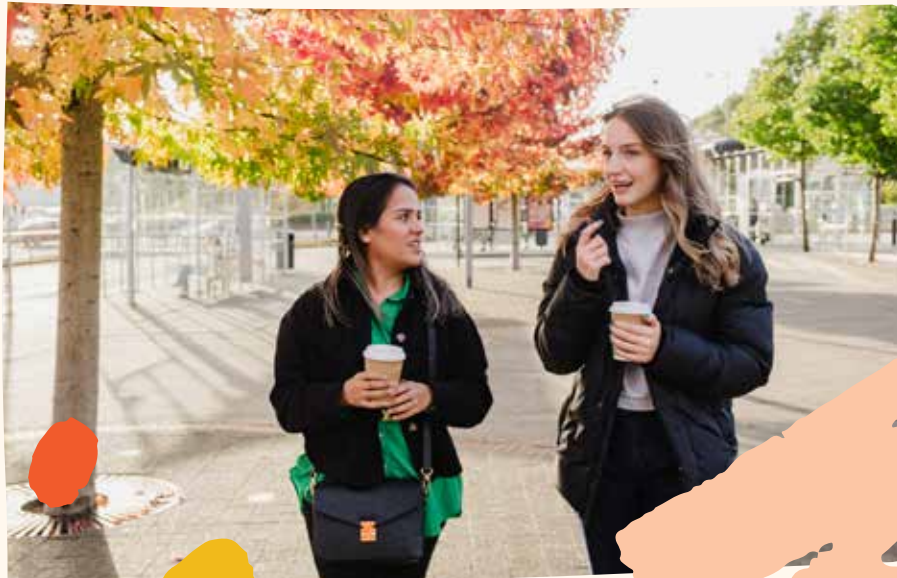
## Additional benefits

**In addition to payments and allowances, all ten local councils across Greater Manchester provide foster carers with access to a range of additional benefits and rewards cards.**

These additional benefits vary across each local council but may include:

- Free leisure/gym membership.
- Free or discounted access to local family attractions, museums etc.
- Blue Light Card: The UK's leading discount service for those working in the social care sector. [bluelightcard.co.uk](http://bluelightcard.co.uk)
- Max Card: The UK's leading discount card for cared for children. Families can use their Max Card at venues across the UK to get free or discounted admission. [mymaxcard.co.uk](http://mymaxcard.co.uk)
- Vivup: Council benefits scheme offering discounts on retail, leisure and shopping, and access to health and wellbeing benefits.





# Support

**The support that the Foster for Greater Manchester team provide begins right at the very start of a person's journey to becoming a foster carer:**

- A dedicated phone line **0300 303 0321** is available to ask any questions.
  - The team is on hand to answer questions, explain each step of the process and provide guidance throughout.
  - Information is available to help make informed decisions and build confidence as a foster carer.
  - Opportunities to talk to existing foster carers.
  - Full training and support is provided locally throughout the journey to be an approved foster carer.
- On being approved as a local council foster carer:
- The foster carer receives unparalleled professional support from a dedicated team of fostering practitioners.
  - They become part of a large local network of foster carers who are there to offer peer support, assistance, advice and encouragement whenever needed.
  - The local council's 'buddy' mentor scheme links less-experienced foster carers with more-experienced foster carers in their local area who are there to listen, answer questions and share valuable experience.
  - A variety of local support groups, coffee mornings and ongoing local training are available free of charge.
  - Access to events and activities where fostering families in the local area can meet and support one another.
  - Foster family fun days out to recognise the work that our foster carers do.

# Pre-approval training

**Training is delivered in locations across all the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester to enable prospective foster carers to choose a training session that best suits them.**

Foster for Greater Manchester's 'Skills to Foster' training course is provided during the pre-approval stage of the process. This free course provides a solid introduction to what it's like to be a foster carer. Completion of the course is mandatory for all prospective foster carers.

The course goes into greater detail about fostering and is designed to help manage expectations about the roles and responsibilities of being a foster carer. It provides key information about the experiences faced by children and young people who come into care, and how to help and support them.

Prospective foster carers will develop essential skills to help build positive relationships as well as learning how to manage and resolve challenging situations.

Throughout the course, prospective foster carers are encouraged to ask lots of questions to learn about how fostering works and the support and training on offer. It also provides an opportunity to meet with experienced foster carers, social workers and others new to fostering.



The training course covers:

- What being a foster carer involves.
- Who are foster carers?
- How fostering may affect your family and your way of life.
- Is fostering right for you and your family?
- The impact of good foster care to a child's life.
- Skills and knowledge you need to develop when you become a foster carer.
- Working together to safeguard children.
- Understanding attachment and caring for children.
- Understanding and managing foster care transitions.
- An introduction to working with birth parents.
- An introduction to trauma informed parenting.



# Ongoing training

**All training for approved local council foster carers in Greater Manchester is available free of charge.**

All 10 local councils provide ongoing mandatory and optional training courses for their foster carers. This training is held locally and online. During the first two years, newly approved carers are required to complete a series of core skills training.

The training courses available include:

- Attachment and identity.
- Care planning.
- Health needs of cared for children.
- Parenting cared for children.
- Safeguarding.
- Life story work.
- Paediatric first aid.
- Therapeutic training, supporting children through trauma.
- Safer sleeping.

There are also opportunities for additional training and support to further develop in the role as a foster carer.





## Mockingbird

**The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme, which is in operation across all ten local councils in Greater Manchester, is designed to bring foster carers together and cultivate meaningful relationships between children, young people and foster carers.**

The programme brings together groups of foster carers and their families, who effectively act as an extended family to one another. Through group get-togethers, activities, celebrations and informal support, they act as a support system to one another in a way that feels natural and sociable.

Not all fostering families are required to be a part of Mockingbird, however there are opportunities to be involved if the local council feels it would be suitable for you.



## Foster Care Ambassadors

**Foster Care Ambassadors are experienced foster carers who are passionate about fostering and have made a commitment to support the recruitment of foster carers across Greater Manchester.**

Working very closely with the Foster for Greater Manchester team, they provide end-to-end support to prospective foster carers, from initial enquiry through to approval. They attend initial home visits along with recruitment officers or social workers and offer support and check-in calls during the assessment process.

Their main role is to help answer any questions about being a foster carer. By sharing their knowledge and experiences of fostering with their local council, they provide a true reflection of day-to-day life as a foster carer. They are a guiding hand and play a pivotal part in welcoming new foster carers into the fostering community.



# Foster Care Associations

**Foster Care Associations across Greater Manchester provide valuable peer support to foster carers and their families in their local area.**

They are voluntary organisations that work closely with local statutory agencies and local informal groups to engage families in positive activities.

They provide workshops for foster carers, children and their families to help them learn important life skills and instil positive attitudes and relationships.

Foster families with lived experience help deliver the sessions, providing a safe space among individuals and families in similar circumstances helping them to share, learn and often just open up about their feelings.

Foster Care Associations also provide valuable feedback to local councils to help continually improve foster care. They represent the views of foster carers and are well placed to offer solutions on ways that policies, processes and support can be improved.



# Learn more

The **fosterforgm.com** website provides all the information needed to get a good understanding of what fostering is all about. The 'Learn more' section of the website provides additional information through regular blogs together with real-life stories from foster carers across Greater Manchester.

Details of regular in-person and online events taking place across the whole of Greater Manchester also feature. These free events and information sessions provide an ideal opportunity to speak directly to members of the Foster for Greater Manchester team and local council fostering teams.

Once you are ready to start your journey to becoming a foster carer, please get in touch with us.



Phone on  
**0300 303 0321**



Email at  
**enquire@fosterforgm.com**



Enquiry Form at  
**fosterforgm.com**

A committed and friendly member of our Foster for Greater Manchester team will contact you within one working day of your enquiry and will answer any further questions you may have about fostering. They will also explain and guide you through our step-by-step approach in your journey to becoming a foster carer.



# Transferring from another area or agency

**Approved foster carers are able to transfer to one of the ten local councils across Greater Manchester if they are registered with an independent fostering agency, or are new to the area and have previously been registered with a local council outside Greater Manchester.**

**01**

## Enquire

Contact us on **0300 303 0321**, email us at **[enquire@fosterforgm.com](mailto:enquire@fosterforgm.com)** or complete our online enquiry on **[fosterforgm.com](https://fosterforgm.com)**. A member of our team will contact you within one working day.

**02**

## Application

You will be asked to complete an application form to transfer, and you will also need to consent for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and medicals to be carried out. You will need to inform your current fostering agency that you intend to transfer to your local council. After the completion of your application, your local council will allocate you a fostering social worker.

**03**

## Assessment

Your social worker will oversee your fostering assessment and will contact your current fostering agency to discuss the timing of your proposed transfer, to avoid disruption to any children you currently care for. Your social worker will arrange a further home visit to update your assessment information and capture your valuable fostering experience.



**04****Panel**

Following a successful assessment, your social worker will make a recommendation for your approval to become a foster carer with your local council.

You will be invited to attend a fostering panel alongside your social worker. The panel members, who have relevant experience in fostering, will review the assessment report prior to the panel.

They will discuss your assessment, ask questions, and provide an informed recommendation regarding your approval. They will also specify the age range and number of children that you will be able to care for.

**05****Decision**

The panel's recommendation is presented to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), who will review all information and make the final decision about your approval to become a foster carer with the local council.

Following your approval, an end date will be jointly agreed between the local council and your current fostering agency. Likewise, the date to commence fostering for your local council will be set. You will have access to ongoing advice and guidance through your local council and you'll also be invited to training and support groups, where you can connect with foster carers and truly feel part of our fostering community.

# Notes





# Foster for Greater Manchester



**0300 303 0321**



**enquire@fosterforgm.com**



**fosterforgm.com**



**@FosterForGM**

together  
we are

**GREATER  
MANCHESTER**



**FOSTER FOR  
GREATER  
MANCHESTER**

**Bolton  
Council**

**Bury**  
Council



**MANCHESTER**  
CITY COUNCIL



**Oldham**  
Council



**ROCHDALE**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Salford City Council**



**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Tameside**  
Metropolitan Borough



**TRAFFORD**  
COUNCIL



**Wigan**  
Council