



*They need  
someone who  
cares*



**Wigan**   
**Council**



**Your guide to fostering in Wigan Borough**

Could you  
**foster?**

**01942 487200**  
[wigan.gov.uk/fostering](http://wigan.gov.uk/fostering)

**The Deal** 

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## Introduction

**Thank you for taking the first step to becoming a foster carer and making a difference to a child's life.**

You must have lots of questions and this booklet will answer some of them for you.

However, if you still have questions after reading this or if you'd like some more details, please contact our friendly team for an informal chat.

### What is fostering?

Fostering is an arrangement in which adults care for a child or children whose birthparents are unable to care for them. Children come into care for a variety of reasons and may have suffered abuse or neglect. Being placed in foster care offers children a chance to regain stability and security in their lives in a family home.

Fostering is challenging and demanding but it is also extremely rewarding.

## Who can foster?

### There's no 'typical foster carer'

Wigan Council welcomes applications from people who are single, living together, married, divorced or separated, heterosexual or gay. The law states that you must be a minimum age of 21 but there's no upper age limit on applicants you just need to have some experience with children which will help you to provide a secure and

stable environment for a child, as well as the energy to keep up with them and a good support network of family and/or friends.

Although there aren't any particular qualifications needed to apply for fostering, you do need to have the basic skills, ability and commitment to care for children or young people as well as enthusiasm.

# Mythbusting

**There are lots of misconceptions in terms of who can, and cannot become a foster carer.**

We do not exclude anyone from consideration on the grounds of sexuality, race, marital status, gender, disability or employment status.



**Here are some common myths, which often stop people from applying to become a foster carer:**

*I can't continue working if I foster.*

**FALSE** X

You must consider the demands of looking after a child and whether your hours are flexible enough to fit around this for school runs, meetings and appointments. You would also need to be available during holidays and when they're ill (check your employer's foster carer policy).

*I'm single so can't foster.*

**FALSE** X

You can foster if you're single, with a partner of the same sex or different sex, married divorced or widowed.

*I don't own my own home so can't foster.*

**FALSE** X

You can rent or be a homeowner. If you rent your home your tenancy will need to be secure.

You also need to have a spare bedroom. This helps ensure that your foster child and any children of your own have their own space and privacy.

**For more mythbusting visit our website: [www.wigan.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/fostering)**



“ Everyone  
deserves  
the chance ”

# Fostering options

## **There are different types of fostering for you to consider.**

From caring for a child or children for one day, a week, to every day for the remainder of their childhood and everything in between.

It's important to choose the option which works best for you and your family.

## **General foster care**

Foster carers play an important role working with children and young people to help make sure they get the care and support they need. From attending school and health appointments to taking part in extra curricular activities, foster carers look after the children in their care on a day-to-day basis.

**General foster care falls into two categories - short term and long term.**

**Short term** fostering means providing a child or young person with a place to stay until they can return to their own family, or until it becomes evident that they need a

more permanent foster placement or possibly adoptive parents. A short term foster placement can last from a few days to several months depending on the situation. A short term foster carer will need to be available to respond to urgent or short notice requirements for foster placements.

**Long term** foster placements give a child or young person somewhere to live and grow for a number of years if they cannot return to the care of their own families. This can last for many years, usually until the child reaches 18, or beyond until the young person becomes ready for adult life.

## **Parent and Child**

Specially trained foster carers will take parents and their babies into their home, providing them with care and support and teaching them how to care for their baby.

Becoming a parent at any age is a challenging time in life but doing this whilst being away from home is extremely difficult.

Carers are needed to help both the parents and the child through this journey. They will need to provide support, advice and reassurance, making both parent and baby feel comfortable in their new surroundings.

## **Short Break (Respite)**

Foster carers offer part-time care to provide both the children and their family or regular foster carer with a break. Children may have disabilities or have behavioural difficulties. Arrangements are made to suit the needs of the child. This scheme is often attractive to people looking to build up their experience of fostering, or when your current work patterns restrict your ability to offer full time care.

## **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)**

Foster placements are needed for children and young people seeking asylum where they can feel safe

and begin to build a new life for themselves. Young people and children seeking asylum are most often motivated learners, who make a positive contribution.

## **Step down**

Children and young people living in residential care are looking for foster homes offering a loving, stable, family environment. These children will have experienced a lot of difficulties such as severe neglect and abuse, experienced multiple moves and will be coming from a residential setting. This transition between residential and returning to a family setting can be extremely difficult and young people need someone who can understand and empathise with them.

Step down fostering requires patience, understanding, and the ability to allow the young people to express their emotions without being judged.

# Training, allowances and support

**You will receive a wide range of training and support when applying to be a foster carer with Wigan Council.**

## Training and support

- Help completing the application process.
  - A training session for your own children
  - A comprehensive list of training and accredited courses available. This includes access to over 200 courses and also e-learning that you can complete from home
  - Support from social workers and support workers after you've been approved and throughout your foster placements. When working with a Local Authority you will get the opportunity to build up good working relationships with children's social workers
  - Around the clock advice and support including telephone calls and visits and support workers, including outside of the 9 – 5 core hours.
  - Support workers who can offer direct work with the child in placement
- Help with strategies to cope with children whose behaviours can be hard to manage
  - Childcare to help you attend training, reviews or medical appointments if existing arrangements fall through
  - Support groups where you can share knowledge and experiences and extend your support network
  - Information about activities for young people in the community
  - We recognise the vital role your children play in the role of fostering and we offer activity sessions throughout the year to show our appreciation and give an opportunity to meet other 'kids who foster'
  - Regular newsletters.
  - Annual Celebration Event for foster carers and their families

## Financial allowances

Fostering isn't all about giving, the rewards are also fantastic. Seeing the difference when a child's confidence and self esteem grows and watching them blossom at school is a reward in itself. Wigan offers competitive weekly payments.

# Hear it from our children



*Lucy, 15*

Give someone a chance, it won't change their past but may change their future



*Gary, 14*

Sometimes it takes one person to care to change everything



*David, 12*

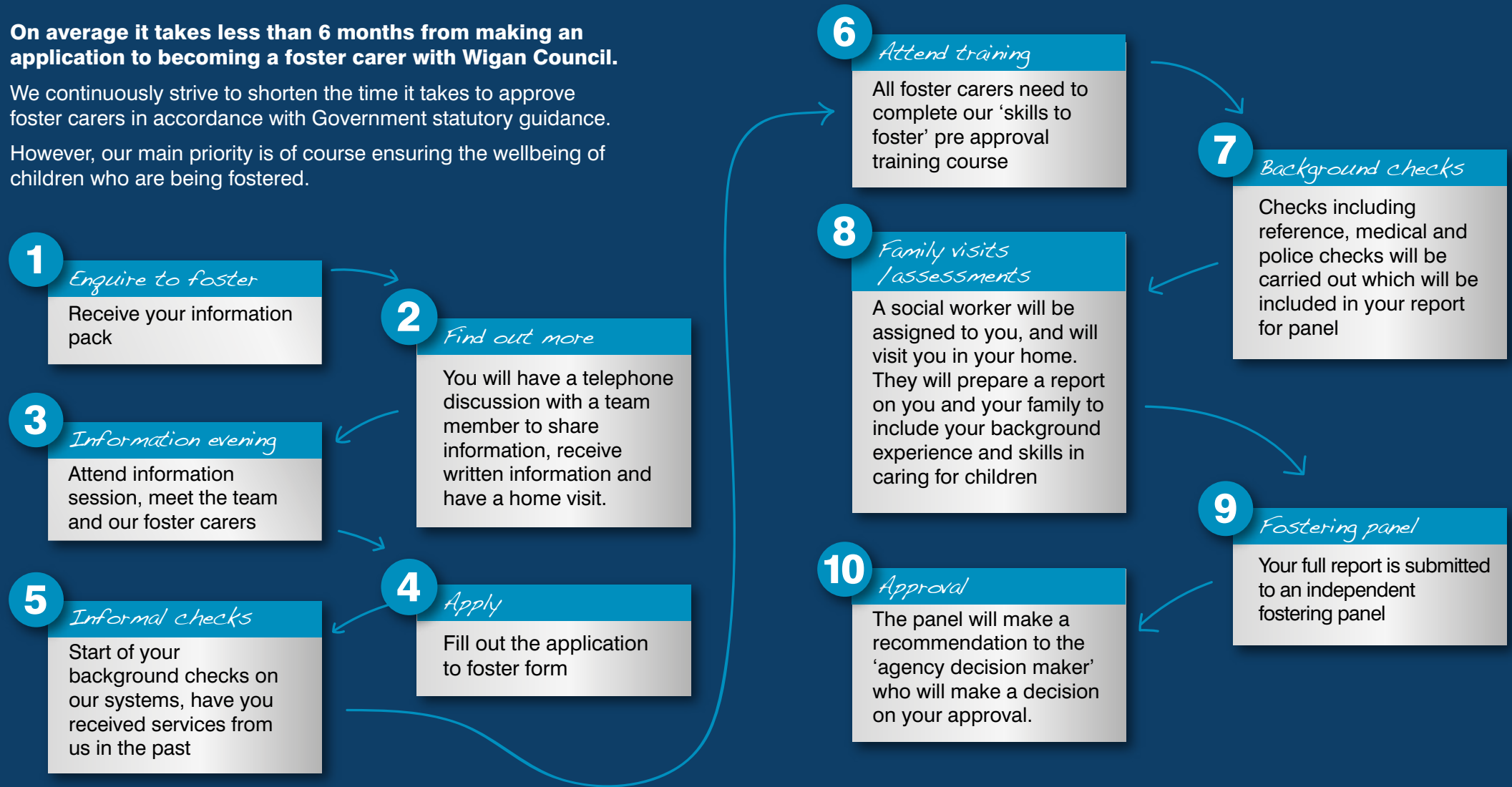
Everyone deserves the chance to show they've changed

# A foster carer's journey

On average it takes less than 6 months from making an application to becoming a foster carer with Wigan Council.

We continuously strive to shorten the time it takes to approve foster carers in accordance with Government statutory guidance.

However, our main priority is of course ensuring the wellbeing of children who are being fostered.





## Our foster carers

### What skills and qualities do you need to be a foster carer?

You will need to be patient and have a positive attitude. Be flexible and willing to learn and develop yourself. You will also need to have good communication skills and be able to not only work with children but also with other professionals who are part of the team in a child's life.

Our foster carers come from different backgrounds, but all have one thing in common, they want to make a difference to a child's life.

### Hear some of our foster carers stories:



#### Bev Woodward

"Our social worker has been an excellent source of support and advice as and when we have needed it. We felt valued and appreciated when we received an award for 'Families Who Foster' at the celebration event recently held."



#### Suzanne Ritchie

"We moved two children on to adoption this year. This was emotional, but lovely to be a part of. We enjoyed being able to support the new families and move the children on happy."







For more information or to  
apply online visit:

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

or call us for a chat with  
our friendly team:

**01942 487200**