



# YOUR GUIDE TO BECOMING A FOSTER CARER



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# INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on making the first step to becoming a foster carer!

We know that making the decision to foster is a big deal, but don't worry, you aren't committed to anything yet, this is just the start of the journey.

We are here to help you gather the information that you need to decide if fostering is right for you and your family, and whether TACT is the right agency to share your fostering journey with.

This guide is designed to take you through the fostering process and answer the questions that we are regularly asked by people thinking of fostering, you will also find stories and experiences from our current foster carers, which we hope will help you to get a taste of life as a foster carer.

Our foster carers are nothing short of heroes, dedicating their lives and working tirelessly to transform the lives of children and young people in care. At TACT, our role is to ensure that they are supported and empowered to do that. Our carers tell us overwhelmingly that they feel well supported and we are proud that **96% would recommend fostering with TACT.**

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"As a foster carer, you are helping children to have a better, happy life in a safe environment, and you can't put a price on that. Words can't describe how being a foster carer feels. I would recommend anyone who is considering fostering to think about it and don't forget to involve your family in the decision process, as you will need their support. For me, fostering has been extremely rewarding, and I feel pride in what we have achieved. We may not be his birth parents, but he understands that we will always be here for him."

**ANTHONY**

**- TACT FOSTER CARER SINCE 2016-**

# BETTER LIVES FOR OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



## OUR VALUES



### ASPIRATIONAL

By helping others to grow, we grow ourselves.



### PASSIONATE

We are determined to keep improving. We will ambitiously pursue the best outcomes for everyone we work with and strive for excellence in all we do.



### CUSTOMER FOCUSED

We shall listen and respond to the people we work with, children and young people, their birth families, carers, our staff, our supporters and local authorities.



### FAIR AND EQUITABLE

We will be open and transparent, communicating what we do and why we do it, based on equality and respect for all.



### BEYOND PROFIT

Reinvesting our resources into services for our carers and improving outcomes for children and young people.

# ABOUT US

TACT is the UK's largest dedicated fostering charity and we have been supporting foster carers to help transform the lives of children and young people for over 25 years. We believe that care can and should be a positive, transformative experience for every young person. No matter what we do, our motivation is the same: building better lives for children and young people in care.

As a fostering charity our primary role is to provide you with the support you need, when you need it, to help you change children's lives every single day.

But as a charity dedicated to building better lives for children and young people there is so much more to what we do.

## **We are a voice for young people**

The voices of our young people will always define what we do. We are passionate about helping young people in our care to find their voice and we are determined to ensure their voices speak loud and clear.

Listening to and valuing young people's views and ideas helps us to deliver better services and campaign more effectively on their behalf.

## **We are a campaigning charity**

As well as providing a voice, we campaign for the issues that matter to the children and young people that we support. We seek to influence public policy around care across the UK, working with politicians, civil servants and other stakeholders to campaign for positive change.

## **We provide lifelong support**

Our vision is to build better lives for children and young people for their whole life, not just the part of it where they are in our care. Our support does not stop when a young person becomes an adult and moves on from their TACT foster parents. Through our TACT Connect project, young people have a community and support network that they can turn to whenever they need it throughout their lives.

# WHAT IS FOSTERING?

Put simply, fostering provides a safe home for children and young people who are unable to live with their own families. But being a foster carer is so much more than providing a bed and putting a roof over someone's head – it is helping each child to build a better life.

Every child deserves a safe and loving home to grow up in, to be surrounded by people who are dedicated to helping them grow, develop and to reach their potential. As a foster carer your role includes:

- Providing support and encouragement
- Helping to build confidence and self-esteem
- Supporting the development of social skills
- Creating a sense of self-worth
- Raising aspirations
- Helping to improve educational achievement

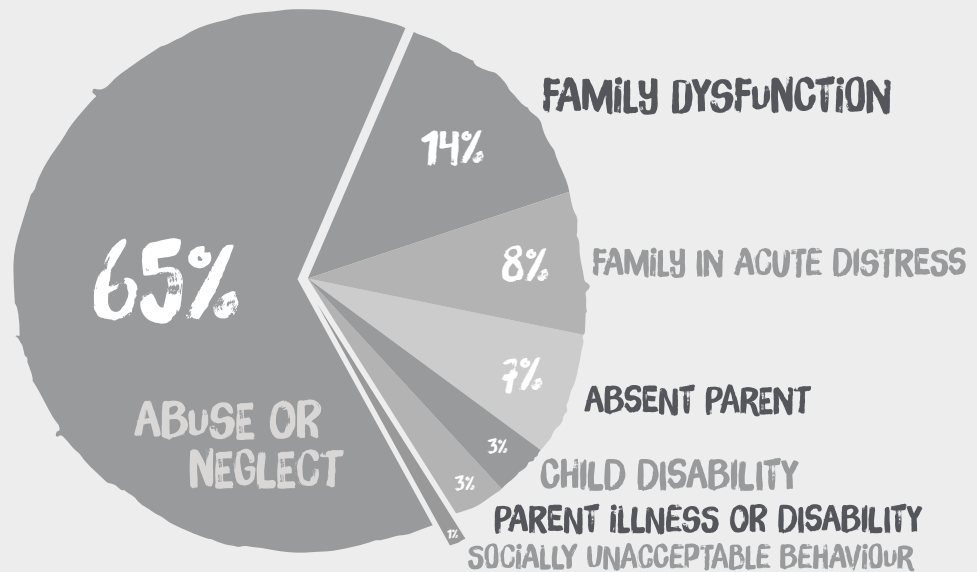
## Why do children need fostering?

There are many reasons why children may come into care, but in many cases, they are unable to live with their family because they have experienced some form of neglect or abuse. Such stressful life events can impact a child's behaviour, ability to develop skills, learn information and get along with other children and adults.

Looking after a child who has experienced trauma can be extremely challenging, but it can also be hugely rewarding to play such a pivotal role in helping them to overcome their early experiences, transforming their lives and enabling them to reach their full potential.

**To find out more about different types of fostering see page 20.**

## REASONS CHILDREN COME INTO CARE



## F.A.Q

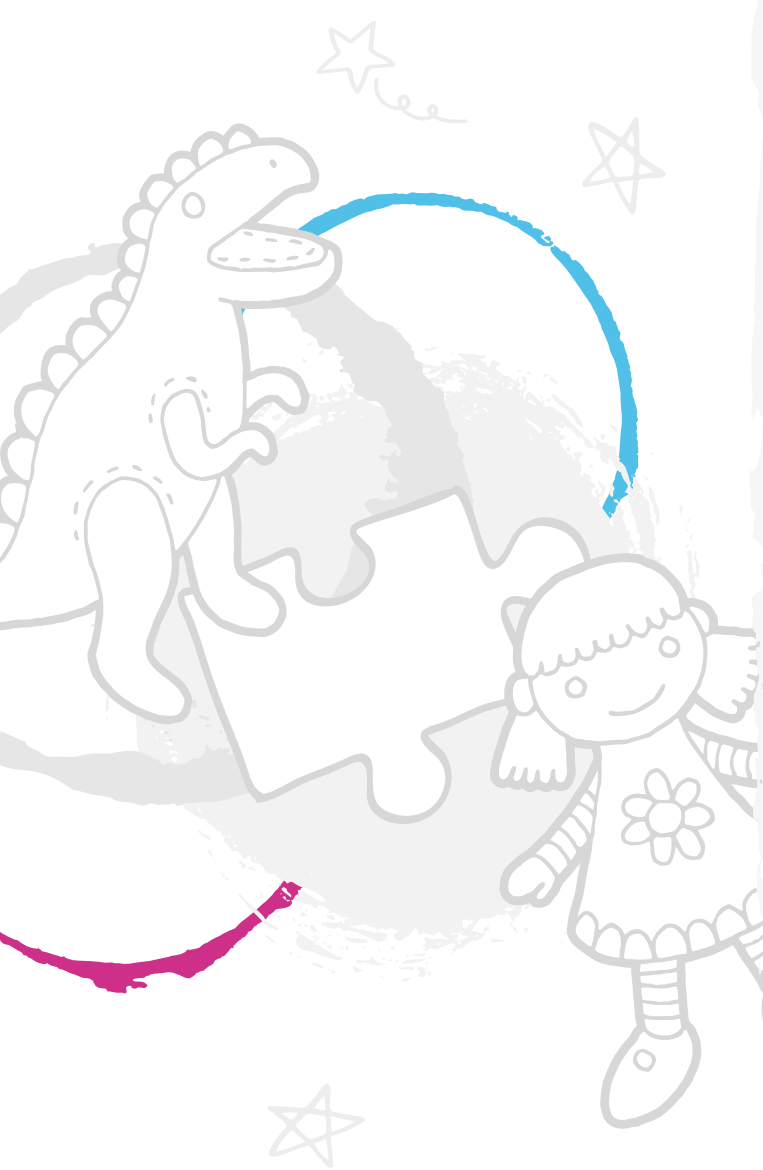
### DO I HAVE TO BE MARRIED OR IN A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP TO FOSTER?

You can be single and foster! Many of our carers thrive as single carers as some children are better suited to a single parent household. However, if you do permanently live with a partner, you will be assessed and approved as a couple.

# WHY FOSTER WITH TACT?

When it comes to fostering with TACT, we go that extra mile to ensure that our foster carers and the children they provide care for are given the best possible support.

Here are our top 10 reasons to foster with TACT.



## 1. THE UK'S LARGEST DEDICATED FOSTERING CHARITY

We are the UK's largest dedicated fostering charity and we've been helping to find loving families for vulnerable children for over 25 years.

We put young people at the heart of every decision because all children deserve to live in loving, safe and stable homes. We are not driven by profit, but by the best possible outcomes, which is why all our surplus income is reinvested back into the services and support that we provide to our carers and young people.

## 2. WE PROVIDE A VOICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We are passionate about providing a voice for children and young people in care. Their needs and views are at the heart of everything we do. We actively campaign to influence government policies and argue for positive changes that enable young people to achieve their full potential.

## 3. PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST

Children and young people will always come first at TACT. This is why we carefully and expertly match children to our fantastic team of foster carers. We never pressure our carers to take a placement just because a bed is available, it's always about matching each young person with the most suitable carers to enable them to thrive and feel supported in their foster home.

## 4. 24/7 FOSTER CARER SUPPORT

When you become a foster carer with TACT, you are assigned a Supervising Social Worker who will provide support every step of the way. We know fostering isn't a 9-5 job, which is why we're available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. **Read more about our Support on page 16.**



## 5. A GENEROUS FOSTERING ALLOWANCE

We know that our foster carers are motivated by improving the lives of children and young people and not by money, but it is important that they are suitably rewarded for their hard work and dedication. Therefore, our carers receive a competitive weekly fee and fostering allowance when a child is placed with them – as well as additional payments and tax reliefs. **Read more about our Fees & Allowances on page 14.**

## 6. COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

We provide our foster carers with the learning and training to enable them to develop their skills, knowledge, and experience. Our training programmes are designed to suit each individual's learning needs, ensuring that all the courses undertaken are relevant and chosen specifically to help our foster carers grow in confidence and ability. **Read more about our training and development on page 19.**

## 7. DEVELOPING NEW INNOVATIVE SERVICES

We are always looking for new and innovative ways to provide support to our foster carers and young people. As such, we have recently developed a specialist Education Service which aims to ensure the very best educational outcomes for our children and young people. Such is the success of the Education Service we are now developing a specialist Health Service that will provide support, advice, training and advocacy in relation to the health of our children and young people.

## 8. SUPPORTING OUR CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE

For young people, leaving care doesn't mean that we stop caring. That's why we created TACT Connect – a community to help and support our care experienced young people. Our TACT Connect Advisors are care experienced themselves, meaning they have first-hand knowledge of what it is like to be in care. **Read more about TACT Connect on page 23.**

## 9. WIDE UK COVERAGE

At TACT, it is important that we're physically there for our foster carers, as well as being on the end of a telephone. Being the UK's largest dedicated fostering charity means that our teams cover most of the UK, so we're never far away. Our coverage means regular visits from social workers, opportunities to take part in local training and events and lots of children's activities.

## 10. WE'RE PARTNERS, NOT PROVIDERS

We have been working with local authorities for over 25 years and pride ourselves on developing strong partnerships with them across the UK. Our reputation for excellence, coupled with our not-for-profit status, means that we get high volumes of placement referrals - ensuring regular placements for our foster carers.



### FAQ: CAN I FOSTER IF I AM LGBTQ+?

Of course! Your sexual and/or gender identity does not determine your suitability to foster. Whether or not you can foster depends only on your ability to provide a stable and loving home for a child or young person.



# WHO CAN FOSTER?

Our foster carers come from all kinds of backgrounds, cultures and ethnic groups. We believe that your sexuality, ethnicity, marital status, age or whether you own a home do not determine your suitability as a foster carer, and therefore will not impact on your fostering application.

A popular misconception is that there is a huge amount of criteria you must meet to be a foster carer. But to start the process of becoming a foster carer there are three basic criteria that you need to meet:

You must...

## 1. BE OVER 21 YEARS OLD

This is to ensure you have the emotional capabilities and life experience to fully care for a child or young person. There is no upper age limit.

## 2. HAVE A SPARE BEDROOM

Every child or young person deserves individual space to adjust and grow and sharing a bedroom with you or one of your own children isn't a suitable situation. You do not need to own your home.

## 3. BE A FULL-TIME RESIDENT IN THE UK OR HAVE INDEFINITE LEAVE TO REMAIN

This is to ensure full stability for the child in your care.

If you meet the above criteria, we would be keen to speak with you and discuss your suitability to foster in more detail. We will need to know about any experience that you have as well as any convictions or involvement with the local authority. In some cases these will affect your suitability to foster, but would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

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F.A.Q

### WOULD I BE ABLE TO WORK ALONGSIDE FOSTERING?

Whilst you do need to be readily available to meet the needs of children placed with you, there are a lot of foster carers with older children who manage to fit part-time or freelance work around the demands of fostering. Every case is unique, and our fostering enquiry team will be happy to discuss your individual circumstances with you.

### DO I NEED A CAR TO FOSTER?

Whilst you do need to be able to regularly transport your child or young person to various important appointments and ensure they can get to school, it is not necessarily essential to be able to drive or to have your own car. As long as there is sufficient public transport available, you could still foster. This is something you can explore during your initial enquiry.



**A GOOD  
COMMUNICATOR**

**EMPATHETIC**

**PATIENT**

**ENERGETIC**

**A GOOD  
FOSTER  
CARER**

**RESPECTFUL**

is...

**SUPPORTIVE**

**COMMITTED**

**GOOD  
HUMOURED**

**CARING &  
NURTURING**

**A GOOD  
LISTENER**

There's no one type of ideal foster carer. Every foster carer is different and can bring all kinds of unique strengths to the role. The most important criteria by far is your ability to listen, empathise, provide a stable and loving home and speak up for the children you care for. At TACT, we have a sturdy matching process, meaning we need as many distinctive life experiences and personalities within our carer pool as possible.



# FOSTERING JOURNEY

At TACT, we have a team dedicated to recruiting new foster carers to ensure that you are supported throughout your journey. Below we have outlined the main steps and timescales of the process. We aim to complete your assessment and get you to panel as quickly as you are comfortable with.

## 1. INITIAL ENQUIRY

Making the first contact can be a big step, but our enquiry team are on hand to put you at ease. At this stage you are not making any commitments. It is an opportunity for you to find out more about fostering, to help decide if it is something that you want to pursue.

You will have a chat with a member of our team who will ask a few questions about you, your household and why you are interested in becoming a foster carer. This will determine whether you meet the general criteria to foster.

### Initial Enquiry Timescales

The call will usually take between 15 and 30 minutes and can be scheduled at a time to suit you.

## 2. VIRTUAL HOME VISIT

The next step is what we call a 'Virtual Home Visit', which may be with the same person that you spoke to during the enquiry or another member of the Carer Recruitment Team.

This appointment will take place using Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp (if these are not platforms you are familiar with, we can support setting it up). This meeting will involve a more detailed discussion about your understanding of fostering and the needs of looked after children as well as your circumstances, your family, any experience that is relevant to fostering and your motivations to become a foster carer.

In addition, you will be required to show us around your home to check that it is suitable for fostering, in particular the bedroom(s) that you intend to use for fostering. If you are married or live with a partner, they will also need to be involved in the process from this point onwards as they are classed as a secondary carer.

### Home Visit Timescales

The virtual visit usually takes around two hours and can be arranged during your enquiry call at a time to suit you.

## 4. APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT

Now is the time to formally apply to foster. You will be allocated an assessor who will work with you to complete an assessment of your suitability to become a foster carer – this is called a Form F and has two parts:

1. A series of checks are carried out including medical, financial, DBS (in England and Wales) or PVG (in Scotland) and employer and personal references.

Because fostering involves the whole family, other significant adults including ex-partners and adult children may require checks. Your assessor will discuss this with you and confirm who needs to be involved.

2. Regular meetings with your assessor will involve detailed discussions about your family, your childhood and upbringing and relationships, as well as things like your religion and beliefs.

The assessment can feel intrusive, but the questions are designed to help the assessor and panel to understand the impact that fostering might have on you and your family. It is important to be honest and open throughout and speak to your social worker if you have any questions or concerns.

### Application & Assessment Timescales

The assessment takes four to six months to complete. Your social worker will keep you informed of progress and the planned panel date.

## 5. PANEL

Your Form F is presented to the fostering panel, which is made up of independent care professionals. Panel now takes place virtually, meaning you will attend online from your home. The panel will review the assessment and make a recommendation to TACT to approve you as a foster carer.

Carers often get anxious at this stage, but there is no need to worry. You will meet with your assessor and social worker on a regular basis throughout your assessment and they will let you know if they have any concerns before you go to panel.

## 6. YOUR FIRST PLACEMENT

Your journey doesn't end with approval – it's just the start! We will begin the process of matching you to your first placement and will continue to support you through every step of your fostering career.

## 3. INTRODUCTORY TRAINING

Before you apply, you are invited to our Skills to Foster training, to give you a detailed insight into the life of a foster carer. The course will be insightful and emotional as you explore the reasons children come into care, the experiences that they may have had and your role in helping them to understand their feelings and manage their behaviour. The course also looks at the expectations of you and your family and some of the other people that you will be required to work with as a foster carer.

During the course you will meet other people applying to foster with TACT, as well as existing foster carers who will share their experiences and answer your questions.

### Introductory Training Timescales

Courses are delivered virtually over three days and take place every week, meaning you can choose dates that suit you.

At this point you will be introduced to one of our recruitment focused social workers who will support you in deciding if you want to carry on with the process. If you decide to continue they will be your primary point of contact and a source of support for the rest of the process.

# TRANSFER TO TACT

While we are keen to recruit as many new foster carers as possible, we understand that there are a number of reasons why people who are already approved may look to transfer from their local authority or agency.

If you are a foster carer and thinking of changing agency, we hope that our child-centered values and charity status are reasons that you consider TACT when researching agencies.

## HOW TO TRANSFER TO TACT

The first thing to do if you are thinking of transferring agency is talk to our fostering enquiry team, they will discuss your specific circumstances, why you are looking to transfer and answer any questions that you have about whether TACT is the right agency for you.

As an approved foster carer, you will have already been through the recruitment and assessment process, as such we will aim to fast-track this as much as possible. After your initial conversation with our enquiry team, you will be allocated a recruitment social worker who will meet with you to discuss the fast-track process and transfer protocols.

In order to approve you as a TACT Foster carer we will need to complete a new Form F assessment, but we often find that this is much quicker for carers who are transferring agency. Having completed a Form F with your current agency you know what to expect and have a deeper understanding of the process.

## TELLING YOUR CURRENT AGENCY

At TACT we follow the **Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol** set out by the Fostering Network. These protocols aim to promote high standards of practice, minimise the length of time taken in the transfer process and most importantly to ensure continuity of care for children in placement during any transfer of foster carers.

The transfer protocols state that before you formally apply to a new agency, you must inform your current agency of your intention to transfer.

If you are thinking of transferring to TACT with children in placement, you will also need to inform the placing authority and a meeting should be arranged to discuss your plans to transfer and the implications for the children placed with you. We will discuss the transfer protocols with you during your fast-track meeting, and your social worker will support you to ensure you have informed the relevant people of your plans.

**You can find out more about the Fostering Network Transfer Protocols:**

[www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/recruitment-and-retention/transfer-protocols](http://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/recruitment-and-retention/transfer-protocols)

### CARER STORY: KAREN - TACT FOSTER CARER SINCE 2017

After 15 months fostering I was beginning to feel undervalued and unfairly treated, so started to look into new fostering providers.

After doing some research into other fostering agencies and charities, I came across TACT. The views of the CEO which were very child-centred reflected my own, while the fact that TACT is a charity was very important to me. I would not have transferred to a profit-based organisation, so I liked the fact that any money which TACT made was reinvested into their young people and foster families.

The organisation is totally focused around the wellbeing of the young people and foster carers, unlike many other fostering providers where decisions can revolve around the profits received by shareholders.

# WHAT OUR CARERS THINK OF US

At TACT, listening to the voices of our carers is much more than a tick box exercise. We understand that carers have a choice and have chosen to work with TACT as their preferred agency. They choose to remain working with us because we offer consistent support including an out-of-hours service, training and access to a dedicated social worker.

**“THERE HAVE BEEN TOUGH TIMES WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY, BUT TACT SUPPORTED ME THROUGH THESE. OUR AREA MANAGER WAS AMAZING AND ATTENDED MEETINGS WITH US.”**

**“SO FAR I’VE LOVED EVERY PART OF MY JOURNEY, I’VE ALWAYS FELT VERY SAFE AND SUPPORTED.”**

**96% OF OUR  
CARERS  
WOULD RECOMMEND TACT  
TO A FRIEND**

## WHY DO OUR CARERS CHOOSE TACT?

**“WE LOOKED AT OTHER FOSTERING AGENCIES AND THE LA BUT TACT MADE US FEEL SUPPORTED EVEN WHEN JUST ENQUIRING.”**

**“I FOUND TACT TO BE MORE CHILDREN FOCUSED THAN OTHER AGENCIES AND WAS IMPRESSED WITH ONGOING SUPPORT WHICH WAS AVAILABLE.”**

We make an ongoing commitment to support our carers throughout their fostering journey. Fostering isn't always straight forward, but our team will be there to guide you and the young people in your care through the good times and the bad.

# FOSTER CARER FEES & ALLOWANCES

People are often uncomfortable talking about money in relation to foster care and we understand that. As a charity, everything that we do is with the best interests of children in mind. We are passionate about ensuring that money which is intended to improve the lives of children and young people is used for exactly that, and not paid out in the form of profit and dividends to private equity companies.

However, for you as a prospective foster carer, it is important to understand the fees and payments that you will receive once you start caring for a child. If you choose to give up a job in order to foster full time, you will need to know what your income is likely to be to ensure that you are still able to provide a secure home for the young people that you care for.

When thinking about fostering and the finances, it is important to consider that you will only receive payments while you have a child in placement. At TACT, we will work with you to help ensure that you have placements as frequently as possible and your assessor will discuss this with you during the application process.

# HOW MUCH DO FOSTER CARERS GET PAID?

The amount that you will receive as a foster carer will vary based on a number of factors, including the type of foster care you are providing, the age of each child and the complexity of their needs.

Here are some examples of the fees you could expect to receive based on four fostering scenarios:

CARING FOR  
A SINGLE CHILD  
RECEIVE UP TO  
**£460 PER WEEK**

CARING FOR  
TWO CHILDREN  
RECEIVE UP TO  
**£920 PER WEEK**

CARING FOR  
A CHILD WITH  
ADDITIONAL NEEDS  
RECEIVE UP TO  
**£530 PER WEEK**

Example fees are calculated using an average payment based on someone fostering with TACT over 12 months. The average calculation includes the weekly foster carer fee, maintenance allowance and additional payments listed on page 15.

CARING FOR  
PARENT AND  
THEIR CHILD  
RECEIVE UP TO  
**£810 PER WEEK**

## UNDERSTANDING FOSTER CARER PAYMENTS

As a foster carer your pay will be calculated on a weekly basis, per child in placement. You will be paid fortnightly into your bank account.

The amount that you receive will depend on the age of any children in placement, as well as whether it is a standard or enhanced placement – this is usually determined by the placing authority and will be based on the needs of the child.

The payment that you receive will be made up of two elements:

- **Maintenance Allowance** - This part of the payment is design to cover the cost of caring for any children or young people placed with you, such as food, travel and clothing, as well as a portion of the rent or mortgage and household bills. The amount you receive will vary depending on the ages and needs of children in placement.
- **Foster Carer Fee** – This payment is effectively your salary, for the work that you do as a foster carer

## ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS

In addition to the above regular payments, TACT foster carers also receive a number of other payments throughout the year\*. Below are some examples of the additional payments that you might receive:

- **£150 for each child's birthday**
- **£150 for each child for an annual celebration or festival**
- **£1,183 for holiday allowance**
- **£300 for exceptional costs related to a placement**
- **£1,000 as a long service award**
- **£1,000 reward if you recommend someone to TACT who goes on to be approved as a foster carer**

**\*Additional fees are payable where a young person is in placement for each occasion**

### Do I pay tax on fostering pay?

As a foster carer you are classed as self-employed. However, your earnings will be subject to special tax arrangements which in most cases mean that you will pay very low, if any tax on your income from fostering.

Here are the main points:

There's a fixed tax exemption of up to £18,140 per year which means you don't have to pay tax on the first £18,140 income you make from fostering.

In addition, you will also get a weekly tax relief for each child in your care:

- £375 per child aged under 11 (£19,500 tax relief each year)
- £450 per child aged over 11 (£23,400 tax relief each)

For more information on fostering and tax, please contact our Fostering Enquiry Team who will be happy to provide you with more information and send you our Fees Guide.

### Benefits and Fostering

If you currently receive benefits, these may still be paid alongside your fostering payments. The government website has more information to help you calculate your taxable income and eligibility to claim working tax credit.

**Visit:** [www.gov.uk/becoming-foster-parent/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering](http://www.gov.uk/becoming-foster-parent/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering)

## MUST I BE IN A STRONG FINANCIAL POSITION TO FOSTER?

You aren't at all expected to cover the costs of fostering yourself – we will provide you with the appropriate fees and allowances. However it is important to consider that you will only be paid while you have young people in placement.

F.A.Q

# SUPPORTING YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Fostering is a hugely rewarding but sometimes challenging role so, as a TACT foster carer, you can be reassured that you will receive outstanding local support every step of the way.

At TACT, we've been supporting our foster carers for over 25 years. We know that by providing you with the support you need, when you need it, we're providing you with the resources to help you change children's lives every single day.

**Here are the different ways we would support you as foster carers:**

## YOUR OWN SOCIAL WORKER

You will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker who will visit you regularly, ensure that you are fully supported and that you receive any additional training you need. We ensure that our social workers have manageable workloads, meaning that they can dedicate more time to supporting you.

## 24/7 SUPPORT

Fostering isn't a 9-5 job, as such it is likely that you may need our advice out of 'office hours' - for example, on weekends or even in the middle of the night. That's why our dedicated out-of-hours support service ensures that support is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for total peace of mind.

## THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT

Our Foster Carers have access to specialist therapeutic support, as well as training on the effects of trauma and how to care for those who have experienced this, using the PACE model. Ongoing support groups with a consultant psychologist further enhances the understanding and shared experience with other carers.

## TACT'S FOSTER CARER PORTAL

As a TACT foster carer you will have access to our Carer Portal, an online community of TACT foster carers and a place to find information, advice, training and other resources to help you with the day-to-day life as a foster carer. In addition, you will find news and blogs, a forum to connect with other foster carers across TACT plus perks, memberships and offers.



## EDUCATION SERVICE

In 2019 TACT launched a new Education Service that is accessible to our foster carers, for the benefit of the young people in their care. This specialist service provides support and advice to foster carers to help ensure that the children in your care receive the best possible education.



**“WE CHOSE TO FOSTER THROUGH TACT BECAUSE THEY PROVIDE AN EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK AND MAKE US FEEL VALUED AS FOSTER CARERS.”**

**- HELEN -**

**TACT FOSTER CARER SINCE 2015**

## PEER SUPPORT

Sometimes the most valuable advice or support comes from someone who has been in the same situation, that's where our peer support system is helpful. These work by pairing newly approved foster carers with experienced TACT carers, helping them to build bonds with other local foster carers and offering another point of contact for any questions, concerns and learning opportunities.

Every TACT area has a Foster Carer Rep, who acts as a link between foster carers and TACT's Management Team. Foster Carer Reps are consulted on matters of policy, procedure and practice and provide an opportunity for foster carers to share their views about the things that matter to them.

## SUPPORT GROUPS

As a TACT foster carer you will have access to a range of different support groups, from local groups where you will get to meet other foster carers in your area, to specialist groups bringing together TACT carers from across the country.

Our nationwide support groups bring together carers who share similar interests or experiences, such as groups specifically for newly approved carers, single carers, men who foster and LGBTQ+ carers. These groups enable you to share stories, experiences and gain some support and advice where needed, and as a bonus you may make some new friends!

## SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

All TACT teams have a Children's Resource Worker (CRW), whose role is to provide support to children and young people. Similar to your Supervising Social Worker checking in on you, our CRWs are there to check in on both foster children and birth children, giving them someone to speak to and a dedicated source of support.

Our CRWs also arrange regular events, which are open to all children and young people in your household. These events give the whole fostering household a great day out, a chance to unwind and to meet other local foster carers!

## SUPPORT FOR BIRTH CHILDREN

Your children play an important role in the fostering household. They welcome and engage with the foster children in your home. That's why we have regular 'Children Who Foster' events, giving your children the chance to socialise with other young people who are a part of fostering families.

Your Supervising Social Worker will consider your children when matching a foster child to your household.

# CARER STORY:

## HANNAH

- TACT FOSTER CARER SINCE 2017

My husband and I always wanted to foster. We planned to have our own children first and then foster while they were still young. Just before our son turned 3 years old he was diagnosed with autism, but we still wanted to foster and hoped that this wouldn't prevent us.

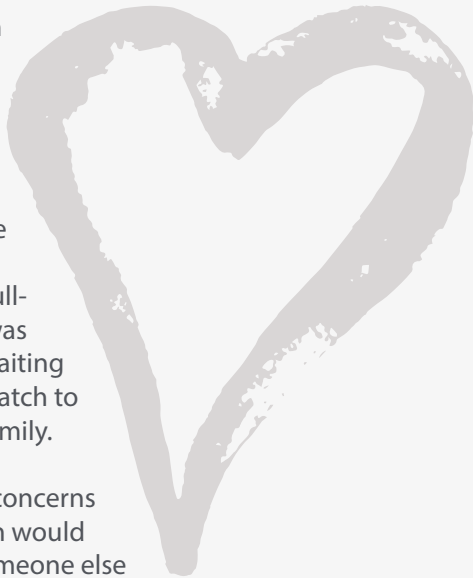
We spoke with TACT, who we found to be very open minded, they explained that it would be a case of carefully matching a child with our household, someone who would thrive alongside our own children.

We began our journey as foster carers with some respite care, before being matched with a child on a full-time basis, but it was definitely worth waiting to find the right match to work well in our family.

There were some concerns about how our son would react to having someone else move in, as well as how our new foster son (then aged 12) would manage alongside a sibling with additional needs. However, we need not have worried as they very quickly formed a very special bond. I still remember the huge smile on my son's face when our foster son came home from school on his first day back after the holidays. Playing with our son also seemed therapeutic for our foster son. Our son didn't ask anything of him and he could be totally himself around him with no judgment at all.

Being parents to a child with additional needs has also helped us to become better foster carers. It gave us the experience of looking after a child where the most helpful response from us was not always the most logical or expected. We had learned to think creatively about the way we parent each child as an individual.

I've written this to illustrate that foster families can come in all shapes and sizes. If you have the desire and the passion to foster, then factors that might be perceived as a barrier can actually often produce a positive effect.



# TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT



At TACT, we are committed to providing you with the very best training available to enable you to make a difference to children's lives.

## Pre-Approval Training

Our commitment to training starts during the recruitment process, with the Skills to Foster training taking place before you start your assessment (see page 10 for more details) and a range of training opportunities offered while you complete your form F.

After completing your application you will be given access to our dedicated training website, which provides over 100 training courses. Many of these are focused on therapeutic models and theory such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Therapeutic Parenting, PACE and the Secure Base Model.

This topic arises from advances in knowledge of the adverse effects of complex trauma on children's social, emotional and cognitive development. It is important for foster carers to have the knowledge, skills and capacities to work within an agreed framework because they are the primary agents of therapeutic change for the children and young people in their care.

The assessment to be a foster carer introduces theory of therapeutic parenting and begins to develop the resilience skills needed to 'stick with' the children and deliver life changing outcomes for them. Potential carers don't need to already have therapeutic parenting skills but need the ability to be open to advice and new ways of working.

## Post Approval Training

Once approved, as a foster carer, we offer hundreds of courses designed to help you to enhance your knowledge and experience. Many of our courses are now online, meaning that you can participate from the comfort of your own home and some learning and development opportunities will be available as one-to-one sessions with your Supervising Social Worker.

Everyone learns in different ways, so any training you undertake will always be structured with you and how you learn best in mind! Your Supervising Social Worker will work with you to ensure that you are receiving the training you need.

During your induction you will meet with your Supervising Social Worker to discuss your training and development needs – and together you will create an Annual Training Plan.

In your first year as an approved foster carer part of your training will be focused on completing the Training, Support and Development standards (TSDs). The TSDs form part of your induction into the role of a foster carer, as they set out the national standard of what foster carers should know, understand and be able to do within the first 12 months after being approved. TSDs apply in England and Wales only. Foster carers in Scotland will undertake similar training in the first year.

Your training plan will be reviewed every year to ensure you are receiving the right training to help you support the children in your care as well as giving you the opportunity to extend your fostering capabilities further and explore specialist areas of interest.

## Therapeutic Training and Support

We match each child or young person with the best approved foster carer to enable them to flourish in a therapeutic environment and heal from the trauma, abuse or a severe disruption they may have experienced in their early lives.

As a TACT Foster Carer you will have access to specialist therapeutic 1-1 support that builds on the knowledge gained during your assessment and enhances your resilience in sustaining placements. Ongoing support groups with a consultant psychologist will help to further enhance your understanding and provide the opportunity to share experiences with other carers delivering a PACE therapeutic model. Social Workers, Therapists and Foster carers work together to achieve positive outcomes for each foster child.

Post approval training and webinars are available to help ensure that you are always building your therapeutic knowledge and skills and this is supported through reflective supervision.



# TYPES OF FOSTERING

Each child that comes into care is unique, which is why we provide different types of fostering placements. We believe that success in fostering and achieving the best outcomes for children in care has a great deal to do with the matching process between child and foster family. We will work with you throughout your fostering assessment to understand which types of fostering are right for you, to ensure that once approved, we make the right match.

## SHORT-TERM FOSTER CARE

Short-term foster care is for children and young people who need to be looked after while a permanent care arrangement is made. This can be returning home, adoption, special guardianship or a long-term foster placement. Short-term placements can last from a few days to a few months and in many cases up to two years. Short-term fostering can be extremely varied as there will be a huge number of reasons why the child requires this type of care.

## LONG-TERM FOSTER CARE

Long-term foster care is for children and young people who are unable to return to their birth family and need a permanent, stable home. As a long-term foster placement they will usually stay with you for their entire childhood to the age of 18.

## RESPITE FOSTER CARE

Respite foster carers provide support to parents or foster carers of children who have a high level of complex needs. For these children and the people caring for them, respite is an opportunity to have a rest, a short-term change of routine and the chance to recharge, in a planned way to ensure that it is not too disruptive for the child.

As a respite placement, a young person will stay with you somewhere between a weekend and a few weeks.

## FOSTERING TEENAGERS

At TACT we urgently need more foster carers for teenagers and secondary school aged children. In 2019 a staggering 63% of all children in care in the UK were above 10 years of age, with 38% being 16 years or older.

There is a common misconception that teenagers in foster care are difficult or troublemakers, and that they are in care because of their own behaviour– but this couldn't be further from the truth. This myth is not only unfair on young people, but also the reason that many people rule themselves out of fostering teenagers.

At TACT, we encourage anyone who is thinking about fostering to be as open minded as possible about the age of children they want to look after and not to rule out teenagers based on these myths, all young people are unique and deserve to be treated as individuals rather defined by their age.

Being a teenager is difficult at the best of times, but for young people who have grown up in care it can be an even more anxious and worrying chapter. As well as the normal challenges that young people face during the transition to adulthood, teenagers in foster care are also coming to terms with being separated from their family, the background and experiences that have brought them into care and the uncertainty about what the future holds.

Fostering teenagers can be extremely rewarding! You get to watch their confidence grow and their interests fully develop, all whilst mentoring them towards independence. Just like any young person, in care or not, they are in need of parental figures who can see their potential and help them to believe in themselves.



## FOSTERING SIBLINGS

Joining a new family and a new home can be a difficult experience for any young person, but it is truly devastating when they are also separated from a sibling. Wherever we can, we try to keep sibling groups together when they go into foster care as having their brother or sister there to support them can make a huge difference to how children settle into their new foster home.

Fostering sibling groups can sometimes be challenging, but it is extremely rewarding seeing the children thrive alongside each other. We provide all of our foster carers who take on sibling groups training and support to ensure that they are able to provide the best possible care. While some same sex siblings can share a bedroom, in many cases it is essential to have more than one spare bedroom in order to foster siblings.

## CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

We urgently need more foster carers who are able to care for children with disabilities, offering specialist care for complex needs. This can include physical disabilities, medical conditions or learning difficulties. By providing a safe and stable home to a child with a disability, you will be giving a young person the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential.

It may be one of the most rewarding things you ever choose to do, and you can be assured that TACT will be by your side every step of the way providing 24/7 support and a huge range of training and development opportunities. As a foster carer for a child with a disability, you will receive a generous fostering fee and allowance to recognise the additional skills and experience you will need to take on this type of placement.

## CHILD AND PARENT FOSTER CARE

Child and parent fostering is when a child is placed with you, along with their parent or parents who need extra support to care for the child. In some cases the parent(s) might just need some extra help and advice, there might be concerns about drug or alcohol use, or it might be a health problem that is making parenting difficult. In all cases, the aim of this type of placement is to help ensure that the child and parent(s) can remain together. As a child and parent carer you may need to take on various different roles, sometimes you will need to provide full care to the child and mentor the parent, whereas in other cases you will need to step back and review how well the parent is coping. This is a specialist type of fostering and as such you will receive enhanced fees for child and parent placements.

## UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN

Every day, more and more children are entering the UK seeking asylum. Many children have been separated from their families and need a safe, stable home here in the UK to enable them to start rebuilding their lives. Fostering young people who are seeking asylum does come with its challenges as they are often extremely distressed and frightened as a result of the overwhelming experience they have been through. Some will speak little or no English and may not always be aware of things we do as part of our British culture.

As a foster carer, you can help to teach these children ways to overcome their traumatic past and the skills they need to successfully build a new life.

## REMAND FOSTER CARE

This type of placement is designed to offer a safe family environment to alleged young offenders while they are awaiting trial or sentencing. Being held in custody can be damaging for vulnerable young people, perpetuating a cycle of imprisonment and reoffending. We believe that remand foster care offers young people the support needed to rethink their actions and break the cycle.

This type of care can seem quite daunting and requires specific skills, but we will support you with training and guidance, to ensure that together we can give the young person the support they need to steer them away from a pattern of repeat offending.



# CARER STORY:

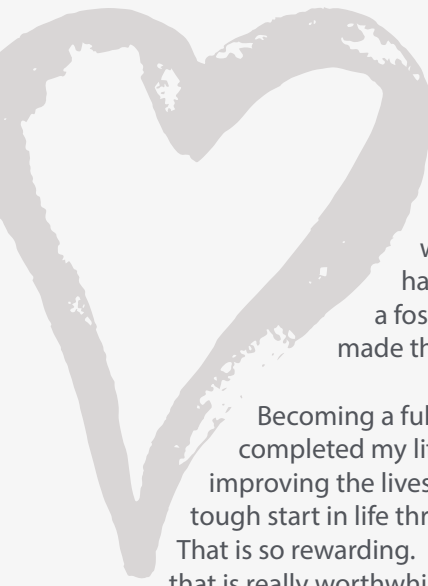
## DAVID & RUTH

- TACT FOSTER CARERS SINCE 2018

When I look back to 2018 I am aware of how much has changed, and how life is so much better now. Back then I was a bus driver and generally feeling unfulfilled. I am now a very proud and very fulfilled full-time dad of four children – foster dad to three siblings, and dad to my birth son.

The children currently with us are the third set of siblings we have fostered and seeing the unconditional love they have for each other, and the special bond they share, it reinforces my belief that wherever possible, siblings should always stay together.

The siblings arrived last year just before Covid lock down and when they eventually went back to school, the teachers were impressed with how much of a positive difference living with us had made to their educational development.



I don't see them as foster children, they are members of our family, and get exactly the same treatment as my son. He views them as his siblings and when my wife and I see how much he has benefitted from us being a fostering family we know we made the right decision.

Becoming a full-time foster carer has completed my life. I know what I do is improving the lives of children who have had a tough start in life through no fault of their own. That is so rewarding. I am finally doing something that is really worthwhile.

I would encourage people with the space in their home and hearts for children to seriously consider fostering. The application process will help you decide if it is really for you or not. And once you are an approved carer you will get lots of training and support from TACT, so you will never be alone. Fostering has made me a better and happier person, and maybe it will be the same for you. You don't know until you try.



# TACT CONNECT

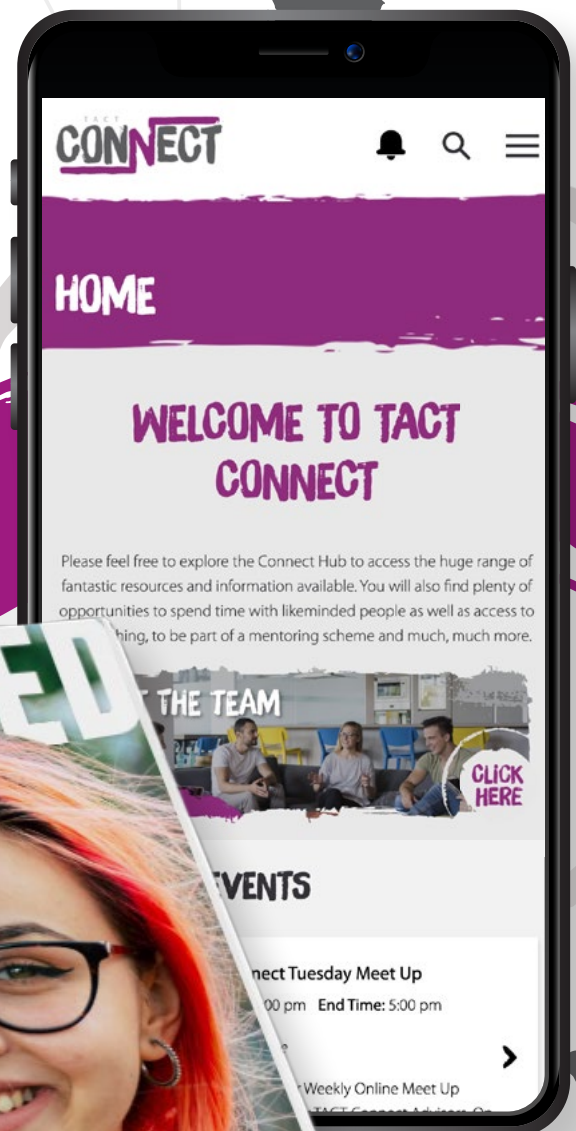
At TACT, our vision is to build better lives for children and young people, and although we are a fostering agency our vision goes beyond the remit of providing foster care. Our commitment to helping young people to build better lives is for their whole life, not just the part of it where they are in our care. Our support does not stop when a young person becomes an adult and moves on from their TACT foster parents.

In 2018 we launched our innovative TACT Connect project as our way of ensuring that we were providing lifelong support. TACT Connect is a community of people with care experience and a place for them to turn throughout their lives.

We know that leaving foster care can be a challenging time for young people, it can be a time when there is a lot of change and uncertainty and there may be a sense of loss of familiar foster parents or professionals. At the same time leaving care may feel like a relief and a time to spread their wings. Whatever a young person or adult experiences, TACT Connect provides a community and a place to turn whether it is to celebrate good times or to access support.

TACT Connect provides members with opportunities to meet up and spend time with other care experienced people and an online Hub providing a huge range of support and resources, as well as the opportunity to access life coaching, a mentoring scheme and financial support amongst other things.

What's more we support our members to speak up, to shape and influence what we do and offer as part of the service, ensuring that as with all areas of TACT we are providing a voice for children and young people and putting them at the heart of everything.





# TACT IN YOUR AREA

TACT is the UK's largest dedicated fostering charity. We support over 600 foster carers across the country providing loving homes to some of the UK's most vulnerable children and young people.

**READY TO START YOUR FOSTERING JOURNEY?**

**GET IN TOUCH:**

**BY PHONE: 0330 123 2250**

**OR VISIT: [WWW.TACTCARE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.TACTCARE.ORG.UK)**



Registered Charity Numbers: England and Wales 1018963 | SC 039052

