



## **Fostering Information Pack**



## **WHAT IS FOSTERING?**

Fostering is a way of offering children and young people a home while their own family is unable to look after them, for a whole variety of reasons.

Foster carers are ordinary people who become child care experts working alongside a team of professionals providing children with the highest standard of care.

Fostering is not an easy option for anyone to take but it does offer the opportunity to make a huge difference to the lives of the children who need it. Fostering can be a very rewarding experience as well as being very hard work!

Foster carers can look after children for anything from one day to several years! Many fostered children return to their own families and if this is at all possible this is the preferred option, but sometimes circumstances are just too difficult and children cannot return home so they will then live in long-term foster care. Unless it is clearly not in their best interests, children are always encouraged to stay in touch with their own families whilst living in foster care.

## **WHAT DO FOSTER CARERS DO?**

Although being a parent already gives a great insight into the needs of children, there are many excellent foster carers who have not been parents before, and fostering is very different to bringing up your own children, partly because children in foster care already have their own families and also because of the many different professionals who will be visiting carers homes and being involved in the decisions about the children's lives.

Some of the key qualities that foster carers need are:

- Being a great listener
- Having a good sense of humour
- Being optimistic
- Having their feet firmly on the ground
- Showing resilience when things are difficult

They must also be able to offer the time, commitment, space and skills to care for children separated from their families.

Here are some of the things you will be expected to do as a foster carer:

### **Provide support**

You will need to ensure that you do all you can to support children and young people in their education, looking after their health and promote their social wellbeing.

### **Attend meetings and manage sensitive information**

Being a foster carer involves more than just looking after a child and it can be a big surprise to see how many people can be involved in the life of one child. As well as the day-to-day care of the child, you will be asked to attend meetings about the children in your care, keep written records, and manage information that is confidential and sensitive. You will help make plans for a child's future. Some meetings will be held in your home and you need to feel comfortable with the thought of different people visiting you on quite a regular basis.

### **Manage behaviour**

Whatever the reasons for children not being able to live with their families, the fact that they are no longer able to live in their own home that they are used to is a traumatic experience, whatever their age.

Fostered children and young people can show their distress through difficult or challenging behaviour as a way of coping with this upheaval. As a foster carer you need to be able to recognise the possible causes of such behaviour and, with the support of your fostering service, develop ways to help the child or young person manage their feelings and experiences.

Foster carers also need to think about the impact that this may have on other children in the family and how they are going to manage it.

### **Promote contact with children's families**

Contact with their own families is very important to children and young people in foster care and as a foster carer you will need to help maintain this if it is felt to be appropriate. This is important, regardless of any personal feelings you may have about the child's parents. Contact can be direct (face-to-face) or indirect (telephone, email or letters) and you will receive training to help you manage this.

## **Work as part of a team**

A team approach is necessary to help children cope with separation, loss, abuse and neglect, settling in long-term foster care or moving on to adoption. Foster carers link to a large network of people: social workers, children's families, schools, health care workers, counsellors, designated teachers and the fostering service to name but a few!

It is really important to learn how to manage these different relationships and always keep the child at the forefront of any decisions.

## **Develop new Skills**

All new foster carers receive training before being approved, as part of a group, and the individual assessment process itself is often quite a learning curve. During your career as a foster carer, you can continue to develop skills by trying something new, attending a training session, seeking advice from another foster carer or social worker or attending a conference.

## **WHO CAN FOSTER?**

Almost anyone can foster, and just as children are all different, so are foster carers. The best solution for children is to have a wide range of carers to choose from so that the best "match" possible can be made.

It does not matter if you are married or not, what your sexuality is, whether you own your own house, and there is no upper age limit either.

The most important "qualifications" are to have the ability to meet children's individual needs, keep them safe, and to have the understanding and flexibility to really understand their situation and stick with them to help them improve their lives.

## **WHO CAN'T FOSTER?**

There are certain offences that will prevent you becoming a foster carer, so if you have ever been convicted of a sexual offence or a violent act towards a child then you will not be able to foster.

## TYPES OF FOSTERING

There are so many ways that foster carers can help children, and what you choose to do will depend on your own family situation, or your experience and the confidence you have. Below are some examples of different types of fostering;

- **Emergency fostering-** Emergency foster carers will need to be prepared to take a child into their home at any time of the night or day and have them stay for a few days. This type of fostering is used at very short notice when it has been impossible to make other plans, for example, if a lone parent is taken into hospital and there is no one to care for their child.
- **Short-term fostering-** This can mean anything from an overnight stay to a period of several months! Short-term foster carers provide a temporary place to stay until the child can return home to their own family or a longer-term fostering placement or adoption arrangement can be made. This is probably the most common type of fostering need.
- **Long-term fostering-** Sometimes children will not be able to go back to live with their own families for a number of years, if at all. Long-term fostering allows children and young people to stay in a family where they can feel secure, while maintaining contact with their birth family. There is always a need for foster carers who can make this type of commitment to children.
- **Parent and Child fostering-** Foster carers can go on extra training to enable them to take both young parents and their babies into their home, providing them with care and support and teaching them how to care for their baby. This can give young people a chance to parent successfully in a more relaxed environment than the other resources that are available.
- **Short-break fostering-**also known as 'shared care', this covers a variety of different types of part-time care. You might have a child to stay for anything from a few hours each week to a couple of weekends each month, giving their own family or their full time foster carers a break.
- **“Leaving care” and supported lodgings-**Some foster carers specialise in helping young people prepare to live on their own as they get older. Foster carers will need to help these young people develop self-confidence along with life skills, such as looking after their own health, budgeting, completing domestic tasks and managing social relationships.
- **“Edge of Care” fostering-**There is a growing recognition that foster carers could play a very important part in helping children NOT to come into full-time foster care, but to be able to support their families to care for them as they should. In this role, foster carers could be acting as role-models as well as providing part-time care to give children and their families a break.

## **WHAT DO FOSTER CARERS GET PAID?**

All foster carers receive an allowance which covers the cost of caring for a fostered child. There are minimum allowances set by the government and rates tend to vary depending on the age of the child, and the type of fostering organisation that carers work with.

There are special tax arrangements for foster carers, which are supportive and recognise the important role that carers play in society. Generally foster carers are self-employed and therefore they don't receive a salary, or an allowance when they are not actually looking after any children.

It is a very important consideration when thinking about whether fostering is the right move, to plan how to cope financially during times when children are not being looked after. Some families consider agency or temp work which they can pick up and drop at short notice as the need arises.

Fostering is a demanding role, both in terms of time and emotions, and although carers can still carry on working whilst they are looking after children, there is a clear expectation that they will be available for meetings, ongoing training and be at home if the child is sent home from school for any reason. It is therefore important to let employers know if you are thinking of fostering and discuss how supportive they might be.

## **WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?**

If you do decide to become a foster carer you will not be expected to 'go it alone'. Fostering can open up doors to all kinds of new supportive relationships but it can also leave you feeling quite isolated when times are tough.

There are various sources of support available to you, and one of the most important will be your supervising social worker, a member of the team allocated to support you from your fostering service, who should meet regularly with you to discuss any concerns you have, offer you guidance, and arrange any training you feel you need.

Other foster carers can also be a great help and regular opportunities are available to encourage carers and their families to get together and form lasting supportive relationships.

There are also specialist organisations that can provide a wealth of support and information. In particular, membership of the Fostering Network provides free legal protection insurance, access to a vast network of foster carers in a similar situation to you, and a range of information and advice services. EFS provides membership to Fostering Network as soon as you are approved.

## **APPLYING TO FOSTER**

Making the decision to become a foster carer often takes some time because it is a decision that will change your life! It is perfectly normal to have some doubts and questions and please look at our FAQ (frequently asked questions) section in this pack if you can't find what you need here.

## **INITIAL ENQUIRY**

When you first contact a fostering agency, they will probably ask you some initial questions about you and your family, including whether you have a spare bedroom, who is living in your household, what sort of related experience you might have that could help in the fostering role and whether you have committed any offences or think there might be any other information about you that would immediately stop you from applying. You will then have the opportunity to arrange a meeting in your home, where you can discuss your interest in a bit more detail and get more information about the process and what is involved.

After this meeting, you will be invited to apply to become foster carers, if you are still interested, and to attend some training groups to help prepare you.

The training groups are designed to help you think more about whether fostering is right for you and your family, and they also give you the chance to meet other people at the same stage of thinking, as well as give some practical tips and information to help you in the fostering task.

## **FOSTERING ASSESSMENT**

Once you have made your application to become a foster carer, you will be assigned a social worker who will work with you to properly assess your suitability. Your assessment will include:

- A number of visits to your home by your assessing social worker-usually around 8-10 in total
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all adults in the household
- Local authority checks and other background checks, including personal and professional referees
- A health and safety assessment of your home
- A medical report by your GP
- Individual meetings with your own children to make sure that their views are heard and taken into account
- Making a Welcome Book for children who might come to live with you
- Starting on a personal portfolio to achieve the Training, Support and Developments Standards for Foster Care.

This may sound like a daunting list but your assessing social worker will support you every step of the way. Most assessments are completed in 4-5 months and although this might seem like a long time, it does give you and your family a chance to prepare properly.

## **FOSTERING PANEL**

Once your assessment is finished, a report called a “Form F” is completed, which contains your life history! The report specifically details what you have to offer as foster carers and the strengths that you have as well as areas that you might need to develop as you go forward in your fostering career.

The report is signed by you, so you have the opportunity to ensure that it is factually correct and that you are happy with the content. It is then presented by the social worker to the fostering panel, and you are also invited to attend.

The fostering panel is made up of people with different backgrounds, for example people who have been in foster care themselves, a current foster carer, social workers, and people with educational and health backgrounds.

The panel then consider your application to foster and will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker for EFS.

If your application is successful, the hard work really begins! EFS works with the local authorities in your area to identify children who are in need and who may fit well into your family. You always have the right to say no if you feel uncomfortable with any possible placement of a child and EFS will support you in whatever decision is best for you and your family.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Thinking of fostering but not sure where to begin? We know that you will have a whole range of questions, some of which you might find in the “starter” questions below:

- **Do I have what it takes to become a foster parent?**

If you are a caring person, with common sense, who does not readily give up once making a commitment, then you are on the right track.....and a good sense of humour helps too!

- **Life has not always gone smoothly for me – is this a problem?**

No. You don't have to have had a perfect life (who has!). We are looking for people with a broad range of experience from all walks of life – but what is important is that you are able to positively use your life experience to help support a child or young person.

- **Do I need to own my own house?**

No. We know it is difficult to get onto the property ladder. It's fine to be in rented accommodation, as long as the tenancy is secure.

- **Do I need a spare bedroom?**

Yes, every child fostered must have his or her own room.

- **Do I need to be a parent already?**

No, but some experience of children is essential.

- **Am I too young / too old?**

You do have to be at least 21 years old, but you don't have to worry about an upper age limit – being in good health and having the ability to relate well to children is what counts.

- **Do I need to be married to foster?**

No, you don't need to be married, in a civil partnership, or have a partner, though if you are in a relationship you do need to have lived together for at least 2 years.

- **Can I still be employed?**

Yes. You don't have to give up your job, as long as you can make sure you are available for children's meetings and foster carer training events.

- **Would I be paid for fostering a child?**

Yes. The amount of your fostering allowance will depend on children's different needs and circumstances but will generally be a minimum of £300 per week.

- **Do I have to agree to foster for all ages and for both boys and girls?**

No, you can specify both the age range and gender of the children you would like to foster, but this would be fully explored with you as you go through your training as 'preferences' often change as people become both more aware and self-confident.

- **Will account be taken of my own family's needs?**

Yes. Whenever a child is placed with a foster family, we always go through a process of 'matching' the needs of the child with the needs of the foster family.

This is a two-way process, where information is shared with the potential foster carers and their views and opinions regarding their ability to help and support a particular child are actively sought and fully acknowledged.

There is no obligation on carers to foster any or all children that are suggested to them. Indeed, Eastern Fostering Services is committed to minimising the possibility of care arrangements breaking down, and will always try to get the best possible 'match' between child and foster family.

- **What challenges can I expect?**

It's stating the obvious, but children come in all shapes and sizes, with a range of different needs. Some, from chaotic backgrounds, will have difficulty in coming to terms with their new circumstances, and may have 'learned' strategies for dealing with their problems which seem inappropriate and self-defeating.

Whilst you *may* be seen as the immediate answer to their problems, it is just as likely that you will need to *earn* trust before it is given, whilst at the same time helping the child to develop new behaviours and responses to difficult situations.

So the challenges are not inconsiderable, but, as any experienced foster carer will tell you, with the right motivation, support, and training, they are not insurmountable. And the rewards for bringing a positive change to a troubled young life are truly unique.

- **And what supports will there be?**

Eastern Fostering Services is committed to providing one of the lowest social worker to carer ratios in the fostering sector, so advice, guidance and support will always be on hand, not just during 'normal office hours', but through our carer emergency hot-line, 24/7.

Our qualified social workers are highly experienced, with backgrounds including specialist expertise in helping foster parents and parents find ways to effectively work with troubled behaviours.

Through our Support Workers, we also offer practical help to carers to deal with, amongst other situations, those times when you literally have to be in two places at once!

And, in the event of an emergency, or *should* things just get too much, we will always look at ways in which we might help you take a short break from your caring role.

- **What training will I need to undertake?**

Prior to becoming an approved foster carer there is an introductory "Skills to Foster" training course which normally lasts three days. Additionally, through the assessment process, we will also work with you to identify any particular training needs you might have to equip you to be both effective and comfortable in your new role.

Once approved, there are a number of further training workshops which all new foster carers must attend in their first year. Thereafter, Eastern Fostering Services will provide regular training, identified by carers and staff, designed to address the needs of both children and carers.

Eastern Fostering Services will also support you to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care, which help you to develop and reflect on your practice.

- **Is it possible to take a holiday or a longer break from fostering?**

Yes. In fact, foster carers will often be supporting a child or young person for a limited period, perhaps whilst social services are exploring the possibility of adoption, or, for instance, when it is planned that the child will return to his or her birth parent(s) after a specific difficulty has been resolved. Subject to particular circumstances, when a child returns to parents or moves on, we may well encourage the foster carer to take a short 'break' from fostering to re-charge batteries and reflect on how things have gone.

There may also be times when, perhaps arising from changing family circumstances, foster carers would like to take a longer break. Again, this is perfectly alright. Eastern Fostering Services wants to support its carers to be the best that they might be, and understands that sometimes a longer break is needed. All we would ask from carers 'on sabbatical' is that we keep in touch so that we can continue to support you as best we can.

- **What vetting takes place before I can be considered?**

Background checks take place to ensure that there is nothing in your past that would automatically **prevent** you from becoming a foster carer (e.g. a criminal offence against a child) and an assessment is undertaken to explore your **suitability** to become one.

This is very much a joint process of exploration, rather than simply checking-up on you. There will be a recommendation at the end of the assessment regarding your becoming a foster carer, but alongside the training you will undertake, we know that the process will help **you** to decide if fostering is for you.

## What our carers think...

### ...about our recruitment process

The Panel was very friendly. The experience was far less daunting than we expected.

Our assessor was polite and reliable. She put us at ease straight away. She was very knowledgeable about the process and we felt well prepared when we went to Panel.

Our assessor was absolutely lovely and we couldn't have chosen anyone better.

The relaxed atmosphere, course content, values, experiences of others on the course made it more informative and thought provoking

Good discussion and engagement by everyone.

Very interesting and well presented.... a lovely relaxed atmosphere as always.

### ...about our training

### ...about our care and support

We have found everyone who works at the agency absolutely lovely, we are so glad we decided to choose them...they are like a little family unit...we felt at ease with them from the initial visit.

If something isn't working, then EFS helps me think of different ways of approaching a problem.

Fostering's not always easy, but my social worker helps me put things in perspective when the going gets tough.

## **A FOSTERING FAMILY'S VIEW**

### **Female Foster Carer**

Deciding to become a foster carer was a decision that we thought long and hard about as we knew that it would have a very large impact on our life, but I'm so glad that we did. We had been discussing it for years but the time never seemed right, then in December 2011 we took the brave decision and contacted EFS and we haven't looked back.

Elle and Sarah came out first to our house and we had a good relaxed chat and they told us about the agency and answered any questions we had. We were then appointed an independent social worker who went at our pace to get all the paperwork started. It took many months and really makes you look deep inside yourself and take a good hard look at your life, which is a really good thing as you need to go into fostering for the right reasons, like helping someone who hasn't been as fortunate as ourselves. We've been fostering since nine days after successfully passing panel and it has been over six months now.

Believe me it's hard work, I have been hit, kicked, spat on and sworn at to begin with, but once the child placed with us learnt to trust us and realise that we were sticking with them and believing in them and not sending them away they have come on in leaps and bounds and we have got back more than we have put in.

Waking up and seeing their smiling face each day instead of the scared look they had at the beginning, like a rabbit stuck in the headlights, is a lovely thing. Being able to give them normality, new experiences that we take for granted and seeing their face light up because we have taken the time to open up our home and our hearts.

Fostering is hard work and at times I was so exhausted I could have sat and cried but I have cried more tears of joy just by being able to be a part of this little boy's life and to give him the opportunities that he wasn't getting and to see his little face light up with each new experience, be that tasting a new food, getting new clothes or visiting a new place. They absorb everything and love and thrive being respected and treated as an equal in our family.

It feels like he has been here forever and is very much a part of us. If you're thinking about fostering, give it a go, it won't be for everyone but it is very rewarding and I don't regret becoming a foster carer at all.

### **Male Foster Carer**

For many years my wife has wanted to either foster or adopt a child/children but, due to several reasons, I had been firmly against this; I was a commercial diver working away from home for lengthy periods and we already had two young children of our own. After several years of diving I moved into the offshore survey industry on deep sea seismic vessels almost anywhere in the world, this required me to be away from home up to two months at a time and at one point I was away for 12 weeks door to door. As my wife was essentially bringing up our children and looking after our home in my absence I thought it unrealistic for us to foster or adopt.

Now that I have moved to an office based role I am no longer required to travel so much, coupled with the fact that our eldest has now left home and our youngest is going through her 'A' levels in college and with renewed interest from my wife we discussed, at great length and over a period of time, the possibility of fostering.

After finding a nearby fostering agency we applied to become foster parents. There were plenty of forms to fill in with probing questions into all aspects of our life from our appointed social worker; I found this very invasive at first but while going through the somewhat lengthy process I realised that it was necessary to dig into our private lives if we were to be trusted with young persons who may have been mistreated, malnourished, physically or sexually abused and quite probably would be in an extremely vulnerable state.

As our main reason to offer our house and home to fostering for the benefit of a child/children that need a stable caring environment to grow up in so I was annoyed by the questions about money and our personal finances including what I earn in a year. We are lucky that I earn enough money to support the whole family without the need for my wife to work. Suffice to say when I read our Form F which was produced by our social worker I was, at the time, somewhat disgruntled to see the phrase 'do not appear to be fostering for the money'. When I raised this point it was made clear to me that, apparently, the main motivation for many potential foster parents is the money that having a foster child can bring into a household and indeed many foster parents treat fostering like a proper job. I found this concept appalling as I believe that the child will come second in all things when money is the main motivating factor to foster.

My wife and I were required to attend 'Skills to Foster' training over three days; I was a apprehensive at first as I had no idea what to expect. I had no idea of what would be required of us or just what we would be learning. When we arrived on day one we were introduced to the other potential foster carers who were going through the same process as we were, so knowing that we were all in the same boat enabled me to relax somewhat. We had a very good time going through the training and met some very like-minded people who we keep in contact with. The training itself had elements of role play which I think we all enjoyed and it certainly made you think of the viewpoint of a child, which is the whole point really. Sitting at 'panel' was nerve-wracking and a couple of the questions were directly for me; mainly with regard to me working away and would I work away again. Once I answered these and we both answered other questions we were asked to leave while the panel deliberated their decision, again a nervous 20 minutes, we were then asked back in and told that we were successful and had passed our panel.

Shortly after this we went to see a child who was already in foster care but needed to be closer to his home. He is a young, bright lad with plenty of issues but he also has plenty of potential.

My wife has spent quite a bit of time with him with me following up with being with him mainly at weekends or when I get home from work before he goes to bed. I was angry when my wife phoned me to say that he had punched, kicked and spat at her, he had also peed over the floor in the downstairs toilet and spat on the carpet. I was worried as to how I would react when I got home; however I spoke to my wife, she showed me the bruises and I was furious. I took a deep breath and went to speak to him. Without looking directly at

him I spoke calmly and slowly in a low pitched voice. I mentioned the house rules and no bullying was mentioned in there and that he had accepted the house rules when coming into our house, etc. I also said that, as the head of the house, I don't kick or punch or spit at members of the house and pointing out that his activity was not good and he needed to think about how he would feel if the same had happened to him. He seemed to grasp what I had said to him and I was proud of myself for the way I dealt with it.

I have spent a lot of time with him while out with the dogs, he asks some very interesting questions and I enjoy answering them; I hope that he will take on board what I tell him and puts it to good use some day.

I have found different ways with situations rather than shouting and stamping around. I had heard, by phone, that he had been excluded from school, with three other children, for the week for assaulting a teacher there. Again I went home and calmly spoke to him without looking directly at him apart from when I was highlighting a point, where he nodded understanding of the point. I tried to think of a way to let him know that his behaviour was bad and it shouldn't happen again; I used a blind man and a guide dog analogy. Imagine a blind man, he has a guide dog to help him stay safe, get from 'A' to 'B' and stop him bumping into people, lamp posts, etc. The dog is there to HELP the blind man, if the blind man kicks, hits and mistreats the dog the dog wouldn't want to help the blind man any more. He nodded his understanding of the concept that the dog was helping the blind man and the effect on how cruelty would affect that relationship. I then said, "now imagine you are the blind man and me and my wife along with the teachers and social workers are the guide dog; what you have done is give that guide dog a good kicking." It was if the penny had dropped and he nodded his understanding of what I had said to him.

I then said that it is a far better feeling to be thanked for helping someone than it is to be getting told off for doing something wrong. I gave the example of when we were in town and I helped an old lady, who had a Zimmer frame, to cross the road. I said that I wasn't asked to do it nor did I HAVE to do it; I just did it because it was the right thing to do and when she thanked me I felt so good inside. "You need to try that for yourself, it feels so good, perhaps when you have a teacher who drops a book you need to pick it up without being asked and when you get a genuine thank you from that teacher you will feel great inside."

I hear that, when back at school, he helped a teacher to open a door, without being asked to do so, when she was carrying a cumbersome load so something I said must have stuck.

Suffice to say it has been a long journey so far yet we have only just begun to travel along the fostering path. I am pleased with what I have learnt and how I have dealt with some situations since we have had our foster child with us and I can only hope that we can make a positive difference in his life for his future.

**Daughter of Foster Carers (aged 17)**

When my parents first approached the topic of fostering with me I don't think I was quite as aware about what it actually entailed and if I'm honest with you I only said yes at first because, as a teenager, I was excited at the prospect of my parents attention being placed on someone else.

Although, as my parents started looking further into it and contacted EFS, I started really learning and thinking about what it would be like to have a foster child or children living in my family home, at first it was so daunting, thinking about having someone who may have some emotional or physical issues due to their upbringing or lifestyle, living with me 24/7, but then it made me think about how lucky I am to have had the upbringing I have had, and I wanted to share that with someone who hasn't been so lucky.

I knew that my parents had been considering doing something like fostering for years and we were finally in the position where things seemed like it would be a good time, so my parents contacted EFS and after lots of paperwork and meetings I was allowed to go along to some of the group meetings at EFS, which really helped me understand what fostering could be like.

After we passed panel me and my Mum went to meet a young boy and his social worker to see if we could get along, which was brilliant as we got to see what he liked/disliked and got a brief idea of what he would be like as a family member and I think he got a good idea of what we would be like. I had various discussions with some of EFS' social workers to see if I was really ok with fostering, so they like to give the foster carers sibling their own chance to ask questions and talk about any things they'd like which is so reassuring.

When our first foster child arrived at our house and began to get settled he would test the boundaries as much as he could, testing my parents and me, which is where I became glad for EFS' support as I was already aware it could get like this.

When I first had a friend over since our foster child arrived, he would not leave us alone, he chased us around the house, didn't listen to my mother, and kept walking into my room, I didn't have a moments peace if I had a friend round, so I told my mum I didn't want anyone round again, which made it really hard for me, but in the end I stuck with it and now I can have any friends, girls or boys, and my boyfriend over, and like with any kid, if you give him a bit of attention, he'll leave us alone for the rest of their visit. He has also got so much better at socialising with my friends as at first he would be trying to sit on them, cuddling them and annoying them beyond imagination but now he asks politely if they want to look at his Lego or listen to him read, which my boyfriend does on most visits, which makes me so proud to see, because my foster brother is now truly part of our family and has progressed so much.

However, I think the hardest part of the whole fostering experience so far was the few times I had to watch our foster child hit, kick, punch, etc my mum. Those times were the only times I regretted the decision to foster, but after my mother, being the main carer, stuck with it regardless of his actions, after us as a family unit, gave him structure, routine, stability and opportunities he has now become the little brother I always wanted. We have our banter and he annoys the hell out of me sometimes, but it wouldn't be natural if he didn't,

because with everything, you have to take the bad with the good, and the good is us playing cards, listening to him reading and laughing my socks off at his young humour.

Personally, I think that fostering, if it's right for you, will bring your family together, as you get to watch your parents help someone else grow up, which makes you grateful to have them helping you grow up, and makes you proud to help your new brother or sister have a happier life and a happy family.



**We hope you found this information pack helpful and you are still interested in fostering!**

To find out more please visit our Fostering Services page on our website [www.easternfosteringservices.com](http://www.easternfosteringservices.com)

If you have decided that you wish to pursue your interest in fostering to the next stage please contact us and we will arrange for one of our team to come and visit – your opportunity to put a face to EFS and ask more questions and our opportunity to get to know you!

**Give us a call on 01206 299775.**

*Thank you for your interest.*