



Your Path to Fostering

Step 1 – Screening Visit

Once you have returned the tear-off slip included in this pack we will arrange for a qualified social worker to contact you. An initial home visit will be arranged with you to discuss your enquiry.

Step 2 – Fostering Preparation Groups

If your enquiry is progressed you will be invited to attend the Fostering Preparation Groups along with other prospective foster carers (either three Saturdays, or six evening sessions). This part of the process will help you and us to make a decision about whether fostering is right for you. The sessions include:

- Why children need to be looked after by North Ayrshire Council
- What foster carers do
- The experiences of children and young people in care
- Contact with birth families
- The law - as it applies to foster care
- The role of the foster carer within Social Services
- Child development
- Strategies for dealing with difficult behaviour
- Looking after children who have been abused
- Helping children to move on

Step 3 – Assessment

If you are progressed to the next stage, you will be allocated a social worker to undertake an assessment with you and your family. They produce a report that we refer to as a Form F. This covers in-depth details about you, your partner, your children and anyone else living in your household. We help you to look at the qualities and experience you already have and help you develop any additional skills and knowledge you need to be able to provide good quality care to a child who is fostered. During the assessment the following statutory checks will be completed:

- Full Medicals (on both applicants)
- Detailed Criminal Records check (listing criminal convictions and people who have been deemed as unsuitable to work with children)
- Current and previous Local Authority checks (based on the current area you live in and any previous areas where you have lived)
- Health Authority checks (looking at records held by various health departments such as Health Visitors etc)
- Fostering Organisation References (if you are, or have previously been a foster carer)
- Employee References (from any current or previous employment involving children)
- Personal References (at least three, who will be visited by your allocated social worker)
- Health & Safety checks (looking at your home, car, and family activities to identify potential hazards)
- Further references (additional references may be sought if this is felt necessary to support your application)

The social worker will visit you at home frequently during this part of the process to collect all the information required for the Form F Assessment. The team leader will also visit you to complete a second opinion report with regards to your assessment. This part of the process takes between three and six months to complete.

Step 4 – Assessment Report & Fostering Panel

Once your Form F is completed you will have the chance to read and discuss any possible amendments required. This report will then be presented to the Fostering Panel, which you and your social worker will attend.

The Fostering Panel is made up of a variety of professionals including foster carers, educational workers, a paediatrician and others with experience of working with children who are in the care system (please see the enclosed booklet on Fostering Panels for more detailed information).

Step 5 – Approval

The Panel members will make their recommendations to a senior manager in North Ayrshire Council known as the 'Agency Decision Maker'. Upon approval you will receive a letter to confirm that you have been registered as a Foster Carer for North Ayrshire Council. A supervising social worker will be assigned to you at this time and they will work closely with you to plan for your first child placement.