

How to become a foster carer for teenagers

For those new to fostering, foster carers for teenagers are approved in the same way as other foster carers, which includes ongoing training and a family assessment.

Currently approved carers who want to develop into being approved as fostering for an older age range, should talk to their supervising social worker.

Want to find out more?

Contact Us

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HOMEFINDING AND FOSTERING

Information for foster carers



Your skills

You may expect that in a few weeks the young person will settle down and accept his or her placement. But they may take longer to accept new family circumstances so don't expect them to be grateful. Foster carers will need to manage their own expectations and be realistic. You need to be resilient and not feel disappointed or rejected.

Reflective supervision and foster agency support is crucial to keep placements stable.

Empathy is also vital. If you put yourself in the young person's shoes, it is understandable they are sometimes hostile and angry. Your family will be very different to what they are used to and they are often fiercely loyal to their birth family.

The process of pushing adults away or keeping them at a distance may be an essential means to protect from further hurt.

Research on foster care tells us that there is one essential ingredient that is necessary to build good relationships between an adolescent and a foster carer.

This is about feeling safe.

Having Boundaries, building trust and being accepted.

"I love the challenges teenagers present. They are dramatic and exhausting and refreshing."

Outcomes

Everybody involved want the best outcomes for the children. Young people often talk about how they need to feel safe. By this they mean physical safety, emotional safety and relational safety.

“I think the kids who don’t have any rules have a problem. It’s scary not having boundaries. Even if they resist them at first”

Good communication, building trust and boundaries are all an essential part of this. Teenagers find it difficult to express their conflicting emotions, so boundaries need to be clear, and they need to be understood that they are for their own good and for the good of the household.

Giving a young person the opportunity to agree on the boundaries often empowers them and allows them the opportunity to meet the expectations of the placements.

That does not mean it will be all plain sailing. Risk taking is a normal part of adolescent behavior. It is unlikely a foster carer will be able to avoid having to manage with such behaviors. It is important to remain supportive even when

a young person has made a mistake.



Fostering teenagers and older children is the fastest growing area of fostering.

Lots of families begin fostering imagining they will be caring for babies or very young children. The reality is that 62% of children looked after are aged 10 years and over.

As a foster carer you are the everyday yet exceptional person journeying alongside the young person. Helping them move forward in a crucial time of their life.

Could you do it?

Adolescents may take longer to accept a new family. It is especially difficult because it would be following a period in their lives of upheaval. There would have been a lack of stability and trust.

It is possible for teenagers to form a new and meaningful attachment at this point in their lives although it requires commitment and patience.

The formation of such attachments involves the creation of trust. Something that will not come easily to older children who have experienced inconsistent parenting and boundaries. Leading to troubled behaviors and confusing emotions, they don’t have the maturity to understand.



Our commitment to you.

Safe. Secure. Supported.

As a fostering agency, we will always try and match you with a placement that suits your family.

Looking after an older child might be something that you have never done before but is part of a sibling group. Or it might be you want to reach out to this often overlooked group of young people.

It is important that we make the experience the most positive for you and the young person. We operate an out of hours service so that there is always someone available to support you and your placement.

The young person might show inconsistent behavior. They are like a pendulum swinging between immature and childlike to assertive and confident.

It has been proven that there are changes in the brain now, more than at any other point in a child's development. It involves mood, emotion and behavior. And whilst a time of great discovery it is often a difficult journey. A young person needs to know you will be on their side and pick up the pieces if things fall apart.

Specific training is available relevant to caring for this age group.

"it is amazing watching confused young people flourish into adults. Reaching their full potential."