# Frequently asked questions about foster care

We hope you find the answers to your questions below. If not, email us!

### Is fostering a young refugee challenging?

Fostering a young refugee requires a deep level of compassion to help heal the trauma they have experienced – both internal and external. But with ongoing support and training, you will be well equipped with knowledge, skills and a good understanding of their needs and you will find it rewarding.

## Would I get support and training?

You would go on an initial Skills to Foster Training, and be able to access a number of free training courses which will help extend your knowledge, skills and confidence in fostering vulnerable children including young refugees.

When you are approved to become a foster carer there are various sources of ongoing support available to you including: an allocated social worker who is there to support you, regular supervision meetings, access to a network of other foster carers and regular support groups.

## Can I still work while fostering?

This depends on the age and needs of the child, however as young refugees are mostly teenagers, you can often work as long as you have enough flexibility to support a young person attend appointments and take them to school/ college. You also need to be available for training, meeting your social worker and for any emergencies. Appointments can range from medicals, to meetings with social workers and Home Office appointments.

Furthermore, when young people first arrive it is likely you will need to be at home full time to settle them in whilst they are waiting for a school or college placement.

## Would I get paid?

Yes, all foster carers receive a fostering allowance to cover food, clothing, travel, activities, savings and anything else a child or young person may need. Foster carers also receive a skills payment. Both of these differ from area to area. Children also receive their own allowances for clothing, birthdays and religious festivals such as Christmas and Eid.

## Do I have to own my own home?

No, you can rent a home and foster as long as you have a legal tenancy with your landlord and their agreement.

You must have at least one spare bedroom for a child. This is because they require their own space and privacy – something a young refugee may never have had before. There may be occasions where fostered siblings can share a bedroom, but the criteria for becoming a foster carer is having a spare bedroom.

## Can I foster if I have my own children?

Yes. Many carers have their own children and local authorities match a child to your household. Having younger children does not mean that you can’t foster teenagers. Having your own

children gives you valuable experience that could be useful when a child is placed with you.

Your children will need to be ‘on board’ with fostering. As part of the assessment process, your own children’s views will be taken into consideration.

## Does my faith need to be the same as the young person’s?

No. Your religion is not a barrier to your application to foster. Children should be placed with foster families that can meet their needs, including their religious needs. However, there may be times where you are asked to look after a child who has a different faith to your own and you would need to be open to understanding them and supporting them to access their faith.

## Can I foster if I am LGBTQ?

Anyone can potentially become a carer, regardless of sexual orientation. Fostering should be inclusive and diverse. There may also be young people who have left their homes due to their sexual orientation so an understanding of this can help.

## Am I too old or too young to foster?

Most local authorities will have a lower age limit of between 21-25 years old but will always take into account an applicant’s life experience. There is not an upper age limit, but you need to be

fit and healthy enough to undertake the task. Much depends on the type of fostering you want to undertake.

## Can I foster as a single person?

Yes, what matters is your ability to provide a stable, loving and safe environment for a vulnerable child

## I am worried about modesty issues, can I still be a foster carer?

Yes, many people from different religious and cultural backgrounds have ways to manage modesty issues in the home. It is encouraged that you talk this through with your social worker and other foster carers during the assessment process to explore ways to maintain modesty within the home.

## Can I be a foster carer if I have pets?

Owning pets will not prevent you from fostering. Your pet[s] will be assessed as part of the application process to ensure their temperament and behaviour does not pose a risk. For some young refugees, living with a pet can be a new and intimidating experience, and so their views on pets would be taken into account during the matching process.

## Can I be a foster carer if I have a criminal record?

Having a criminal record does not necessarily preclude you from becoming a foster carer, it would depend on the nature of the offence and how long ago it was committed. It is important to disclose any conviction when applying to foster and all applicants are required to apply for a DBS check. Other checks during the assessment process include local authority safeguarding checks.

## Do I have to speak English to a high standard to be a foster carer?

You will need a good level of written and spoken English. This is so you can communicate with other professionals about the needs of a child as well as keeping records.

## Do I have to be a British citizen in order to become a foster carer?

British citizenship is not required to be a foster carer in the UK. However it will be expected by most fostering service providers that you are a permanent resident in the UK and/or have indefinite leave to remain.

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