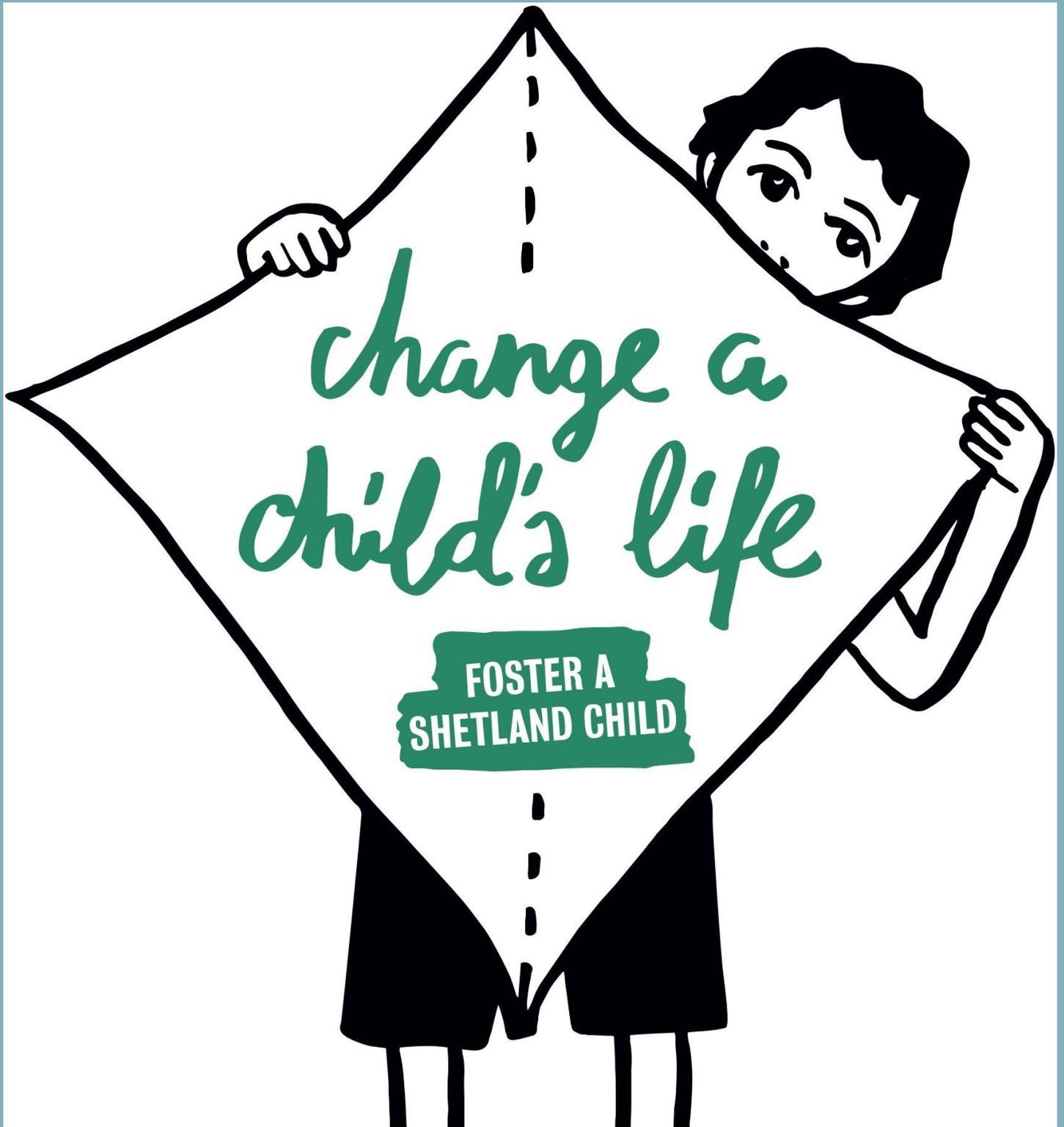




Shetland Islands Council



Becoming a Foster Carer in Shetland
- Information Pack -

Welcome

This information pack aims to provide some basic information about fostering in Shetland.

Fostering is a way of offering children and young people a home while their own parents are unable to look after them. Children need different things and therefore different types of care, so as a local authority we are always looking for new foster carers.

This pack outlines what is involved in fostering and gives a brief summary of key themes in fostering and the process to become a foster carer. The information is intended to allow you to think about the implications for yourself and your family if you wish to become a foster carer in Shetland.

Family Placement Team

Shetland Island Council

fosteringandadoptionteam@shetland.gov.uk

01595 744000

http://www.shetland.gov.uk/childrens_resources/fostering.asp

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Why do children need fostering?

There are children in Shetland ranging from babies to teenagers and from a variety of backgrounds that need to be looked after away from home and placed with foster carers. There are many and varied reasons why children are unable to live with their own families, these may include:

- Short-term illness in the family
- Relationship breakdowns
- Long-term difficulties, drug or alcohol misuse
- Abuse or neglect
- Chaotic lifestyles
- Domestic violence

There may be other reasons why children have to be cared for by foster carers for a period of time. The SIC's social work department's aim is to work with families to help them sort out any problems and make the home a safer place for a child with the ultimate aim, in most cases, for the child to return home.

An important fact to remember is that the majority of the children that have to be placed in foster care will have had some difficult experiences in their family home or earlier in their lives. Foster carers may find these experiences are reflected in the child's behaviour or they cause emotional issues. Due to such and other challenges foster carers have a very important, at times difficult but also rewarding job, that can change a child's life.

Who can foster?

All our foster carers must have a genuine concern for young people and children. Those who find themselves in foster care come from different backgrounds and have a variety of needs. To meet these needs different family settings are required therefore there is no such thing as a “typical” foster family. Carers come from all kinds of ethnic, religious and cultural background and should be over the age of 21 years old:

- You can be single, in a relationship, cohabiting, married or in a civil partnership
- You may have children of your own, step-children, adopted children or no children
- You can be a home owner or tenant, live in a flat or house in any area of Shetland
- You may be working full-time or part-time or no be working at all

We however look for a number of qualities in our foster carers, including:

- The ability to understand and empathise with children who have had difficult experiences in their family home and may have experiences abuse or neglect
- Being able to work as part of a team with social workers, teachers, health professionals and the child’s family
- To be open minded, honest, engaged and willing to learn and develop yourself to be able to support the children in your care
- The ability to stay calm when children display difficult behaviour
- To be flexible, willing to learn and be non-judgemental
- A caring, nurturing manner and have a high level of emotional awareness

What foster carers do and the help they receive.

We are looking for foster carers who can provide a high standard of care and support to the children and young people in their home. Building a nurturing, safe and caring environment for these children is highly important for them to thrive and feel part of the family unit.

Some of the tasks and responsibilities involved in the role of fostering are:

- Look after the child and keep them safe
- Promote development, physical and mental health of the child
- Encourage the child to make the most of their education
- Provide comfort, joy and reassurance with emotional intelligence
- Keep information confidential
- Work in partnership with social work, health and educational professionals
- Encourage family contact and support the child with this
- Respect the child's heritage

You will receive in return:

- Individual support from a Family Placement Team social worker, including regular Supervision
- Preparation and ongoing training
- Allowances and appropriate expenses
- The chance to attend support groups and fostering fun days, where you can meet with other foster carers

Types of foster care

There are different types of foster care as children come onto care for a variety of reasons. Foster children's ages range from 0 to 18 years when they first come into care; depending on the family situation they can stay in foster care for a night, a few days, weeks, months or years. Children will need reassurance and nurture after coming into care and some need ongoing emotional support throughout their care journey. Most children will have contact with their birth parents and social work is always looking to return children home in the first instance if this is safe for them.

Emergency Placement: This is an unplanned placement made in an emergency where no other place has been identified for the child. The likelihood is that the children have to be removed to a place of safety as quickly as possible and foster carers are needed at short notice.

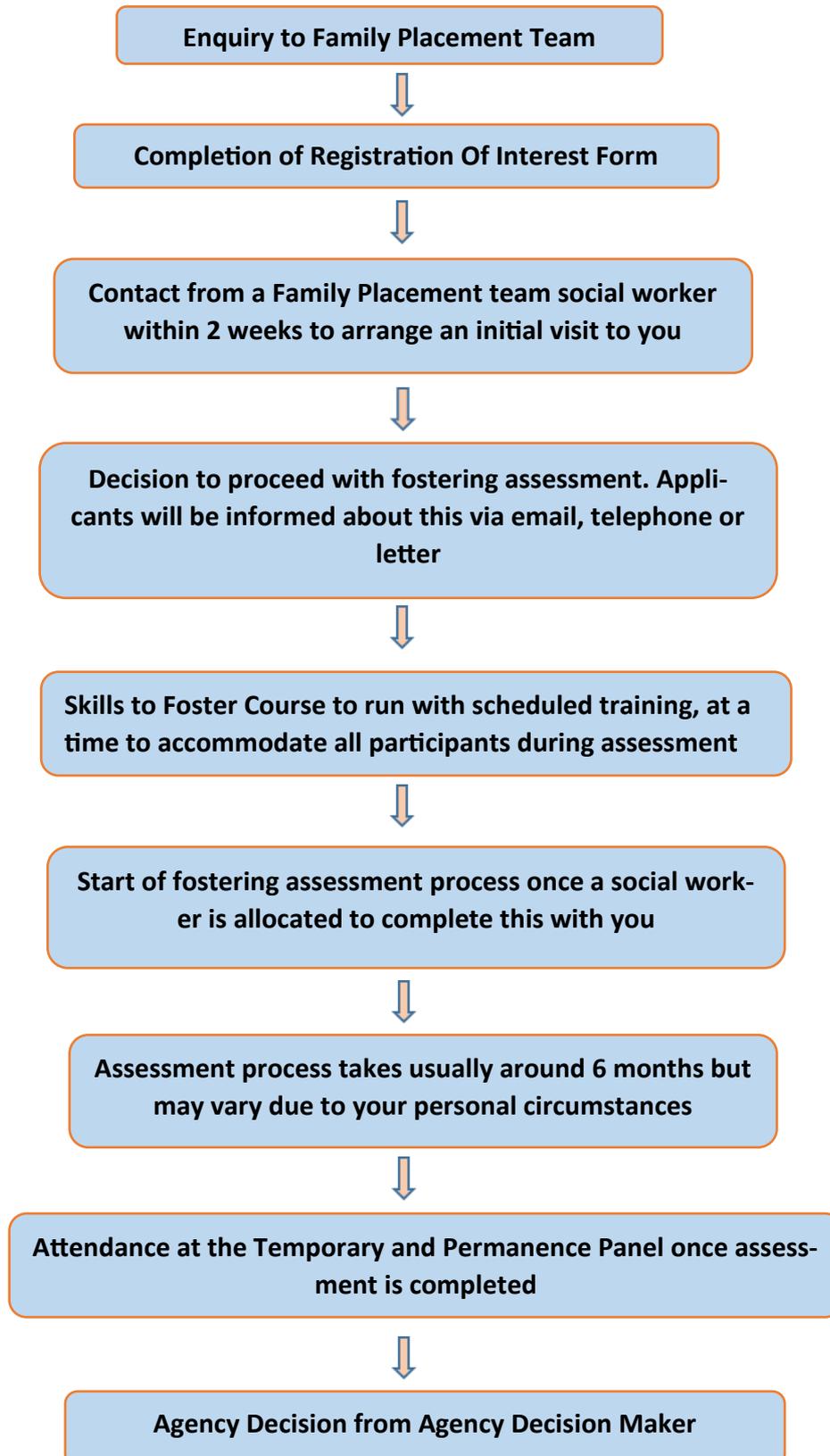
Short Break: A planned placement or series of short stays which can be respite for the child and family or their fulltime carers.

Interim and Long-term placements: Interim and long-term placements are for children that need to live away from their home for more than just a few days or weeks. During this time, rehabilitation home is being assessed by social work and contact arrangements are often in place for the child to see their parents in a safe environment. In some occasions children are unable to return home due to the risks to their safety and healthy development. Children may remain in foster care, residential care or the route for adoption is explored.

Permanent Care: Foster carers who are permanent carers for children and young people will look after them until they reach the age of 21 years old. The children are a part of the family unit and a legal order is in place to secure this. Carers are committed to the foster child as if it was their own child.

The Fostering Assessment

Enquiry and Assessment Process



The Fostering Assessment

Fostering a child with difficult early experiences is not an easy job this needs commitment, skills and knowledge. The purpose of the fostering assessment process is to ensure that you have the ability to foster and children and are prepared for this task.

The assessment should take roughly 6 months but this will depend on your personal circumstances. There will be an expectation to attend a group preparation course prior to your assessment. You will learn more about fostering and if it is right for you and your family. The assessment process is very thorough and will involve you and your family working closely with the assessing social worker. Topics discussed include your family history, your current and previous adult relationships, your parenting capacity and your skills and abilities.

As an agency, we must ensure that there is no reason why you cannot be entrusted with the care of someone else's child. There will be a number of checks that will form part of your assessment, including:

- Protection Of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Check
- Local Authority Checks (current and previous places you have lived)
- Medical Checks
- Personal References (3 per person)
- Employer Reference
- Reference from health visitor, school or similar if applicable
- Other adults (such as adult children, previous partners and relevant persons)
- Documents (i.e. marriage certificates, household insurance, driving license)

If you decide to go ahead with being assessed as a foster carer we need you to be committed to the process and be able and willing to be honest and share all the relevant information with your assessing social worker. The assessment is a partnership work and needs as much input from you as it does from the social worker assessing you. You can expect from us that we will be accommodating of your commitments, be open and honest throughout the whole process and beyond and that we will offer training and preparation for your fostering role.

Frequently Asked Questions

I am single—can I still be a foster carer?

Yes. You will be able to apply to become a foster carer no matter what your relationship status is.

Do I have to be a parent to be a foster carer?

You don't need to be a parent to be able to foster. We welcome interest in fostering from anyone who feels able to look after children.

Do I need to have a lot of space or own my house?

It is important that you have a spare room for the child. However you do not need a big house or own it. As long as you have space to have a child come and stay with you and there is some room for privacy depending on the age of the child.

Do I have to be a certain age to be a foster carer?

As long as you are over the age of 21 we will consider your interest in becoming a carer. We have carers of all ages.

Do I need to be well off to be a foster carer?

No. We will do a financial assessment to make sure that there are no significant amount of debt and that you can support yourself with your income. You will receive an allowance for looking after a child but this will mostly be claimed following a placement, so you should be able to buy groceries and pay necessary bills.

I work full-time—can I still be a foster carer?

Yes, you don't have to be available for full-time placements if you have work commitments. You could look at fostering emergency and short break placements.

Can I foster if my own children are school aged?

Yes you can. A foster child would ideally be at least two years younger than your own child as this tends to work best for the dynamic in the family home.

Next steps...

If you are thinking that fostering is the right things for you or you would like some more information, you can:

Contact the Family Placement Team

fosteringandadoptionteam@shetland.gov.uk

01595 744000

Complete the Registration Of Interest Form

You can find the form to download on the website.

Find out some more about fostering from:

- The Fostering Network

<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/>

- The Fostering in Shetland Facebook page

 /shetlandfostering

- A local fostering information event

Events will be advertised on facebook or other forms of media like the radio, or you can find out by phoning or emailing the Family Placement Team.

Should you have any feedback in regards to improving our website or this information pack we would be grateful to receive this.