**Fostering for Gateshead**

There are many reasons why a child or young person can't be with their birth family. By fostering them you can help them stay in their community and school, close to their family and friends. We need more foster carers to help this happen.

Deciding to foster a child is a big decision. It will not only change the life of the child you foster, but your life and that of your family - in a good way. In return we can offer payment for your skills, access to relevant training and support from our team of specialist staff.

**Who can foster?**

There is no such thing as a typical foster carer.

Whatever your race, gender, sexuality, living arrangements or employment status we want to hear from you. You must be over 21 years of age and fit and active enough to care for a child but 'being older' is no barrier.

Your individual qualities are what matter to us and what you can offer to a child or young person. Carers come from all walks of life, just like the children who need to be looked after. We're looking for people who are patient, flexible, understanding, determined and keen to learn.

You must have a spare bedroom and the time and energy a foster child would need.

**Types of Fostering**

Different types of fostering are available. Our fostering team can help you to work out which type will suit you best during the application process.

**Short term or temporary fostering**

This occurs when a child needs to be removed from their home for various reasons. The placement can be from one night to several months or even longer, depending on the child's circumstances and the legal situation.

**Long term fostering**

Although Gateshead Council's aim is for children and young people to be cared for by their families, there are some circumstances in which children cannot return to live with their birth parents. Long term fostering allows a child to retain contact with their family but to be brought up in a safe and caring environment with foster carers.

**Short break care**

Short break, respite or shared care are all terms used to describe part time care for children. Part time care may be needed to help families in difficulty, providing a break for parents and children. These breaks are often over weekends or holidays.
This type of fostering also offers a break to full time foster carers for weekends, holidays, when foster carers are unwell or they face family difficulties.

**Home from home**

This provides disabled children and their families with regular short breaks by linking them with another family. Some carers provide care for one weekend a month and some children may spend as much time with their carer as they do with their families on a 'shared care' arrangement.

**Mother and baby placements**

Sometimes carers are needed to support young mothers to help them care for their babies. The carers encourage the young mothers without taking over their parental responsibilities.

**Young people aged 16 - 19**

Some young people are not ready to live independently in a flat or sheltered scheme when they leave care. They need a 'bridging' situation where they can carry on developing their self care skills and confidence.

**Emergency fostering**

This is in addition to normal fostering commitments and is usually required at very short notice. It could last up to three days.