

Reasons to care

A rewarding commitment that can make a difference

**LIFE
WITHOUT
BARRIERS**

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We went into fostering with big expectations of the difference we could make, but we quickly realised it's all about the small wins and a gradual process of making a difference.

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Caring for a child or young person is a significant and rewarding commitment that can make a difference in both their life and yours. It's important to consider why you might be thinking about becoming a carer and how this might impact your readiness to step into caring and understand what children and their families need from carers. Here are some compelling and healthy motivations to consider:

Desire to help others

- Many people are motivated by a deep-seated desire to help children who have faced trauma, neglect, or hardship, along with families that have faced challenges, meaning their children require time in foster care. Fostering offers a chance to positively impact a child's life and provide them with the care and stability they need for however long that might be.

Passion for caregiving

- Those who enjoy nurturing and raising children may find fostering a fulfilling way to share their skills and experiences. Becoming a carer can provide an opportunity to care for a child while fostering a loving and supportive environment. You might be one of those child-whisperer people whose openness is evident to children and draws them to you. You love being around kids and helping them to develop. You may be from a big family, and having kids around is a typical, happy environment.

Building stronger communities

- Fostering contributes to building healthier communities. By providing a safe and loving home for a child, foster and kinship carers play a crucial role in promoting social stability and supporting family structures within their communities. There is a need to find children safe and loving homes. You may have thought about this for some time and consider this a real way to positively contribute to your community: by helping one child at a time.

Desire for family growth

- Some individuals or couples may wish to expand their family without necessarily pursuing adoption. Fostering allows them to welcome a child into their home temporarily or long-term, enriching their family life. It is important for people wishing to grow their family network through fostering to recognise, appreciate and value the place that a child's family has in their lives and support those lifelong connections whilst caring. Foster families will never replace the families of children and young people in care but can be a valuable and lifelong extension.

Personal experience

- People who have experienced fostering or have a personal connection to fostering may be motivated to give back. Their experiences can inspire them to create a positive environment for a child in need. You may have had a tough childhood yourself. You

understand trauma, grief and loss and know what it feels like to be lost, alone and frightened. You know how to call out for help, and you remember what it took for you to pull yourself up and walk tall. You have reached a point of acceptance and can use the power of the past to create a positive, stronger future for yourself. You know your life experience has taught you how to be resilient and brave. You can help a child by holding their hand as they take their own steps forward.

Providing stability and support

- Many foster carers are motivated by the opportunity to provide stability and support to children who have experienced instability in their lives. They understand the importance of a safe and nurturing environment for a child's development. Many people working within helping industries recognise the qualities their households have that would provide an optimal environment for fostering. You may know someone who is a foster carer, or you grew up in a foster family. You have seen how solid and positive care arrangements can change the lives of children. You know you have the ability, compassion and time; you know you can help.

Cultural or community contribution

- Children have the best outcomes when they can stay connected to the communities in which they belong. Fostering can be a way to give back to one's cultural or ethnic community by supporting children from similar backgrounds. It helps preserve cultural identities and traditions for the next generation. At Life Without Barriers we are committed to transforming the face of fostering and ensuring children are cared for within communities, so we might offer to connect you with your local community organisation if available.

Creating lasting relationships

- Foster and kinship care can lead to meaningful, lasting relationships with children and their families. Many carers find joy in watching children grow and develop during their time in care. Saying goodbye to children when they return home doesn't mean that carers are no longer an important support to them and their families throughout their lifetime.

Personal growth and fulfillment

- Fostering can be a transformative experience, offering personal growth opportunities. The best foster carers are open to learning and growing from feedback. Fostering challenges individuals to develop new skills, be more empathetic, and promote resilience in themselves and their children.

The motivation to care for a child can stem from a combination of personal values, life experiences, and a genuine desire to make a difference. Whatever the motivation, fostering provides a unique opportunity to impact a child's life positively, offering them love, support, and stability during a critical time. Are you ready to consider why you're interested in fostering now or in the future?

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