

Terry & Sara's Fostering Journey



Why be a Foster Carer?

We had talked about wanting to become foster carers for a number of years and felt it was the right time to bite the bullet and take the next step. Together we felt passionate about making a difference to a child at a time when they most needed it and agreed that this was something that we could do as a family. Our own children were heavily involved in our decision making and, with their blessing, there was no looking back.

We've entered this new journey with our eyes wide open and know that it is going to be demanding at times and we'll need to be resilient, but the benefits it brings to a young person, and being able to see the impact that you can have on their growth and development, simply outweighs all of this.

What was the initial visit like?

The initial visit was very relaxed and we were given all of the information needed to decide if becoming a foster carer was right for us. We knew straight away that this was something that we could do. We were told from the beginning about what the process would be, the stages involved and what to expect, and this really helped us to keep an open mind.

What about the application process?

The application process was thorough, detailed and at times intrusive, all of which we were expecting so there were no surprises. We had to do a lot of homework for our social worker, together and individually, and there was a mixture of activities and work to complete - some of it was simple and straightforward, and some required a deeper thought process. We also drafted in the help of our families when it came to building our family trees!

How did you find the preparation training (Skills to Foster)?

We found ourselves in a unique situation with this as we had originally been scheduled to attend face to face training in May but, of course, we found ourselves, along with everyone else, in the middle of a pandemic so this was postponed.

Initially we wondered what would happen and expected our application to be put on hold for the foreseeable, but we ended up completing it virtually over 3 days with other applicants and a team of experts. Sara is really comfortable with technology and holding/attending virtual meetings so we were in safe hands! The first session was a challenge to begin with as everyone was adapting to this new way of working but by the afternoon the engagement levels were up and there was great collaboration from all.

The training was informative and layered the messages and work we'd already completed with our social worker around the role of a Foster Carer, exploring secure and insecure attachment and behaviours. On the last day, heard case studies from active foster carers and from a young person, which just cemented our purpose for wanting to do this. Our social worker had really prepared us for the training and we felt confident that we were on the right path to knowing and understanding what it takes to be a great Foster Carer.

What about support from your social worker?

Our social worker was amazing and she gave us a huge amount of support and we thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience because of her. Being a foster carer is very different to being a parent and she always kept it very real and kept us grounded. We shared a lot of tears and laughter.

How did you find the experience of Foster Panel?

Strangely, we weren't nervous but we did have a fear of being rejected. We were well prepared for it and we'd read our recommendation report prior to the meeting.

The meeting was held virtually and there was around 8 people on the Panel with varying roles and responsibilities within the sector. They all introduced themselves and explained the part they played in the decision making. Despite it being a really important part of the process, the panel did a fantastic job of putting us at ease. We had to dial out of the call half way through for them to make their decision and got invited back 15 minutes later.....it was a long 15 minutes!!

We were over the moon to hear that there had been a unanimous vote in us being approved as foster carers.

What would you say to someone thinking about fostering?

We feel that it's important to remember that nobody is perfect but we are all human and if you're thinking that you can't do it there will be a million reasons why you can!

Be realistic, embrace the process and keep a growth mindset - it could be very different to how you've imagined it.

For more information about fostering with Herefordshire Council, call 01432 383240, email fostering@herefordshire.gov.uk or visit <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/fostering>

