



Julia's* fostering journey

Why did you decide to become an overnight short break foster carer?

I used to be a full time foster carer, so I know how important it is to have a bit of time to decompress and do things you know your young person doesn't want to do. As I was getting older, I wanted to take a step back from full-time fostering but I still wanted to make a difference. I still really enjoy working with young people.

How long have you been an overnight short break carer for?

I've been a foster carer since 2010 and Adam* has been coming to me for around 4 years now.

What does overnight short break fostering entail?

Looking after a young person with disabilities for a pre-arranged period of time to suit you. It gives the young person and their family a break from their daily routines. During these breaks you'll share experiences and activities that both of you enjoy.

How often do you have your young person for an overnight stay?

Generally he comes to me once a month. Otherwise, it can be anything from a 2 to 6 week gap to suit me, him, and his family.

What kind of activities do you do on overnight breaks?

Adam loves going to car boot sales, looking for old electronics to take apart. I usually try to have something for him to take apart when he arrives. We go to the sales and have a bit of a haggle to see if we can get the prices down! It's something we really enjoy doing together.

Why should people consider being overnight short break carers?

It really brings a different perspective to your life. I find it to be good fun and a very rewarding way to spend weekends. After stepping back from full-time fostering, overnight short break fostering allows me to support a young person on a schedule that works for my life.

What does the young person say they like about their short breaks with you?

Adam is nonverbal, but he's able to communicate whether he wants to do an activity or not. I visit him on Wednesdays before a break to discuss what we can do. We ask him which activities he'd like to do and he signs to say yes or no. He doesn't bring his Xbox to our breaks which shows that he enjoys the different activities we do.

What does the family say about short breaks and how they find this experience?

I think they're really grateful for it. They feel confident that he's happy to come to me. I feel like part of their extended family, I've gone to his birthday party and to school events which is really nice.

What has being an overnight short break carer taught you?

I find Adam a really fascinating person. He's got such a different outlook. It does challenge my perspective on life to see someone else with really different experiences and how he communicates with people and enjoys the world. He is a really nice boy with his own sense of humour and mischief, I'm really fond of him.

*The names have been changed to protect the identities of those involved

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

