



Guide to Short Break Care

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A teal-colored stylized flower icon with five petals, located in the top left corner.

Welcome

Thank you for considering becoming a short break foster parent with Flourish. My partners and I started this small (but mighty) company in 2019 after our experiences in fostering services and our knowledge of therapeutic parenting showed us that there was more that could be done for vulnerable young people.

At Flourish, our mission is to provide foster parents with the support and knowledge they need to have a real impact on the lives of young people who have experienced trauma. Short break care plays an essential role in ensuring a stable and therapeutic environment is consistent throughout the young person's time in foster care.

In this guide, we'll go over the basics of short break care, what commitment is required, how we ensure it remains therapeutic, as well as looking at the training opportunities available and the payment structure.

You'll also be introduced to one of our short break foster parents and gain a deeper understanding of the role.

short break care is essential to the well-being of young children in foster care and I'm thrilled that you're considering Flourish for your fostering journey.

MICA DOUGLAS

Co-Founder and Clinical Director at Flourish Fostering



What is a short break carer?

Simply put, short break foster parents provide care for children when their full-time foster parents are unable to. This is usually because they have personal issues to attend to, or because they need a short break to rest and recuperate from full-time fostering.

Children are therefore usually with their short break family for anytime from a weekend to two weeks.



Where possible, we always try and keep young people with the same short break family throughout their time at Flourish. This allows strong bonds to form between the short break family and the young person and over time the role feels like that of an extended family member.

Providing short break care is incredibly rewarding. Short break foster parents support young people throughout their childhood, becoming a crucial part of their support network. They have the unique opportunity to witness and contribute to the child's growth and development into adulthood.

Many of our short break families provide care for multiple children, extending the positive impact of their support across many young lives. By offering a nurturing and stable environment, short break foster parents play a critical role in the overall well-being and development of these children. They not only give full-time foster parents a much-needed break, but also introduce children to diverse experiences and relationships, enriching their lives.

What do short break carers do?

Short break foster parents become the primary care giver for the young person while in their care. Therefore, their role involves everything needed to make that child feel valued, supported and safe in a secure and predictable environment.

This will include making sure that the young person has transport to and from school, cooking them healthy meals, providing a clean and safe home, supporting them with emotional issues, helping them with homework and school projects, organising visits with their birth family if appropriate, and much more.

We encourage our short break families and young people to treat these stays as short holidays. By creating engaging and personalised experiences for each child, families can make the stay exciting and enjoyable, aligning with our therapeutic approach.

Being a short break carer is a diverse and rewarding role that's suited to caring people who want to positively impact the lives of vulnerable children.



How is short break therapeutic?

At Flourish, our therapeutic approach is at the heart of everything we do. This isn't just about making sure you will always have access to support and our therapy team, it's also about making you an expert in therapeutic thinking so you can consistently deliver the type of nurture and support that is so vital to helping young people recover from trauma.



The core principle of our therapeutic approach is: if children are provided with the right environment and support, they can heal from past traumas and begin to thrive.

Day to day, this difference is reflected in the understanding and empathy that our foster parents have for the young people they care for. Where some may have seen door slamming and shouting, our families are trained and supported to look past the behaviour and to empathise with the young person's experiences that might be causing them to express their feelings through their behaviour.

Looking past the behaviour isn't always easy. That's why we offer robust support packages and training to make sure short break foster parents feel confident and able to deliver therapeutic parenting to the children they care for.





Who are we looking for?

To become a short break foster parent, you will need to have a spare bedroom and have good availability throughout the year to provide a loving and supportive home to young people.

The type of person we're looking for is empathetic, patient, has a passion for making a difference and a desire to be a supportive role model in the lives of vulnerable children. There's no one size fits all approach. We understand that everyone comes from different backgrounds, beliefs and life experiences and we celebrate the diversity of all of them.

Your life experience will give you a unique perspective and ability to help a young person; you may be exactly what that young person needs.





How do you become a short break carer?

Before we can place a vulnerable child in your home, you and other members of your household will need to undergo comprehensive checks and training to ensure that your home will be a safe and nurturing environment for the young person.

The process typically takes between 3-6 months and can be quite intrusive. We will need to speak to your friends, family as well as people from your past. These checks are essential for the safety of the young person and while it may seem daunting, it's important to remember that you'll be supported by our team every step of the way.

HOME VISIT

The first step after enquiring is for us to organise a visit to meet you in your home. This is a good opportunity to discuss short break further and get answers to any questions you may have.

APPLICATION

If we feel that you would be a good fit for Flourish, we will give you an application form to complete.

TRAINING AND CHECKS

While various documents are checked and references are contacted, you'll be invited to attend some training. The first training you will attend is called Introduction to Fostering and is compulsory for all prospective foster parents. After that, you will begin to be invited to our therapeutic training sessions so you can start to learn the Flourish way.

FORM F

Together with your social work assessor you will complete a form F assessment. This is a collaborative document that tells your story and why you would be a great short break foster parent.

PANEL AND APPROVAL

Your form F is presented to a panel who make a recommendation on whether you should be an approved short break provider.



Short break payments

Short break families are paid based on the amount of time they provide care for.

The exact payments a short break family can expect to receive when caring for a young person will depend on:

- The young person's needs
- The amount of time the young person will be staying

Short break families receive the same allowance per night that the child's full time foster parent would receive for that time period.

Training opportunities

Before you can become a short break foster parent with Flourish, you will need to complete training in fostering and therapeutic parenting.

These training courses are designed to give you confidence in your ability to provide outstanding therapeutic care for young people.

Short break foster parents also have the opportunity to access all of our further training opportunities, with the chance to become experts in trauma and therapeutic thinking.



Case study

Tracey worked for a financial institution for 30 years, working her way up from a 'Saturday girl' to a senior manager, loving every moment of her career. However, when COVID came, her mindset changed and she thought it was time to retire. After six months of retirement, she realised something was missing.



WHY SHORT BREAK FOSTERING?

"Therapeutic fostering is about helping the child to help themselves. It's about recognising their trauma and understanding it to help them with healing themselves because sadly we can't heal for them. It's about enabling them with the tools they need to get through life."

THE FUN OF FOSTERING

One of the things Tracey most loves about fostering is how much fun both her and the children who visit her have. She says: "It's not just fun for the children, it's fun for me. I can honestly say I feel ten years younger now than I did before short break care. It has also helped my transition from my old job to here. Going from a full-on, organised, managerial role and now I have to be organised here but it's about making sure I get the washing and ironing done and plan the menu for the week. Everything has to be planned and it keeps the energy in me."

ADVICE TO OTHERS

When asked what she would say to others considering becoming short break foster parents, Tracey said:

"We have a long weekend or a week of absolute fun, and you get paid for it! We honestly have so much fun – why wouldn't you do it?"

"What a lovely way to bring some life to your home, it's rewarding and is definitely keeping me young(er)."



FAQs

CAN I FOSTER IF I HAVE PETS?

Pets make a welcome addition to any family. To ensure the safety of your foster child, all pets need to go through a Pet Assessment, your social worker will guide you through this during your application process.

DO I NEED A SPARE ROOM?

Yes, you will need a spare room for each foster child you place.

DO I NEED TO OWN MY HOME TO FOSTER?

No, you don't need to own your home to become a foster parent. If you rent, you will need to have your landlord's permission.

CAN I FOSTER IF I AM SINGLE?

Yes, you can foster if you are single, married, widowed, or engaged.

WHAT EXPERIENCE DO I NEED TO BECOME A FOSTER PARENT?

There's no direct experience needed to become an amazing foster parent. Often, your life experiences up to this point will have equip you with compassion and sensibility that we're looking for.

HOW LONG DOES THE APPLICATION PROCESS TAKE?

It can typically take between 3-6 months from completing the application form to being approved.



**Foster parents change
lives. Could you?**



www.flourishfostering.co.uk