

A Child's Journey to Adoption

What is a foster carer?

'A foster carer is an ordinary person, doing something extraordinary'.

This could be taking a child in to their home on an emergency basis when it's least expected, but opening their doors none the less. It might be supporting a child having contact with their birth family, whilst knowing those family members haven't been able to parent the child with "good enough" care, but still ensuring the relationship is maintained. Or it could be helping a child with the life changing journey from being 'in care' (in their care!) to being adopted. This journey and transition can be an extremely emotional one, for both carers and children alike, with many questions arising - which aren't always easy to answer.

Workers from the County Adoption Team have devised a new training session aimed at supporting foster carers through just that process and I attended it last week to learn more.

The session aims to recognise foster carers' vital role in a child's move to adoption being, a) possible and b) successful, to validate and share feelings and concerns about moving a child on and also to help foster carers to ease that process for the child being adopted, for themselves and for others in their family and network.

The event was delivered by Stuart Holmes, social worker who is part of the Home Finding Team and also Andrea Lyle and Sharon Saunders who are adoption support workers, both for Nottinghamshire County Council. After introducing their roles, they outlined the process for a child moving from being 'in care' to making a plan for adoption and then supporting the child once a new 'Forever Family' has been found.

It was very interactive training; with lots of foster carers sharing their experiences of the whole process, including activity days and contact with foster children after they have been adopted.

"I don't think I'd be able to let go or say goodbye."

I work within the adoption and fostering recruitment team and this is often something we hear whilst speaking to people. For many, the idea of growing close to a child, caring for them and then seeing them move on to a new family is incredibly tough. I am happy to be able to tell enquirers that we have brilliant training to support carers with this aspect of fostering and that it's nothing to fear. The session reinforces the incredible role foster carers have in a looked after child's life and the difference they can make to the transition for the child.

A strong message from the day was how children pick up on the feelings of their foster carers about an adoption, and how if a foster carer is positive and happy about the adoption process, it allows the child to feel positive too, knowing it is the right thing for them.

Sharon and Andrea confirmed that they are able to continue working with adopted children in their role, after the child has moved to the adoptive placement, giving the child a worker who has supported them through the whole process and someone who can help them settle in after their foster carers are no longer a daily comfort.

It's not always an easy process to bridge the gap between care and permanency for a child, but support is at hand and this course is full of invaluable advice and other sources of information for carers.

The training is available to all foster carers and will run twice a year. Even those with experience of moving a child on to adoption are encouraged to attend as their experiences can provide valuable contributions to this informative and uplifting session.

If you are interested in finding out more about attending this course, please speak to the Fostering Support Officer for your fostering team, or visit the website to book on this course.

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