



A further insight...

into our fostering family



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Foster Carer's Stories

Annette's Story

Annette has been fostering full time with Kibble for just under a year, looking after a 12 year old girl called Lucy.*

Fostering with Kibble has been a rewarding experience for us. My husband and I have been looking after Lucy for just under a year now, and we've seen first-hand how she has developed into a much more secure, settled and happy young girl. It's great to see how we can make such a positive difference.

We have a great relationship with Lucy; we love to go swimming, bake up a storm in the kitchen, or just enjoy family nights in together. Our lives have changed a lot since becoming foster carers, and I feel that it's been really important for my family to realise the value of helping others.

My husband and I felt we had a lot to offer children going through care; he attended Kibble as a teenager so we knew about the charity already. The level of support and training available to us as foster carers has been excellent. We have found that with Kibble there are always staff on hand if we need them, and other foster carers available to offer advice and support.

*Name has been changed to protect the young person's identity.

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Foster Carer's Stories

Isobel's Story

Isobel has been a foster carer for 11 years.

Fostering a young person means going on a journey with them. Where on the one hand you're teaching them new skills and helping them to grow and flourish, on the other you're also learning, and constantly developing a greater depth of understanding and empathy for the young people in your care.

Isla,* the young person I'm currently fostering, is a keen artist and we have a room in the house with all of her artwork on the walls. We love cooking together – after I first showed Isla basic cookery and safety skills she took to it, and now has her own set of pots and pans in the kitchen. Building a relationship with the young person in your care takes time and patience, but the rewards are there when a young person looks up to you, when you gain their trust.

The support and training I've received from Kibble's fostering team has been very helpful in dealing with some of the more challenging times. They don't throw you in at the deep end and are always there to help. Isla has a great relationship with her key worker, Michelle. She's been a good role model for Isla and is great at motivating her to achieve the things that she wants. Michelle is a positive and upbeat character and has done wonders to bring Isla out of her shell.

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Foster Carer's Stories

Isobel's Story continued

Seeing a young person grow and overcome their difficulties, it gives you such a good feeling. I'm still close to many of the young people I fostered over the years, and we often get together for a cuppa and recreate the happy memories of our past."

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Foster Carer's Stories

Norma's Story

Norma was a short breaks foster carer for seven years, and has supported Simon in his adult placement for the last three years.*

I have a good relationship with Simon; he trusts and confides in me. Simon is an adult himself now and has his own independence, but I'm there for him when he needs me. It hasn't always been easy and there have been difficult times but it's rewarding to see a young person grow and flourish. It's all the little things that make it worthwhile; teaching a child a good work ethic, giving them the confidence to go out into the world and get a job.

I came to fostering through serving on a children's panel, where I saw a lot of cases that had come up for consideration for emergency foster care. My day job was in sales, but when I saw a Kibble advertisement for foster carers in the newspaper, I had an interview within the week! From the early days when I did the training, right through to now, the Kibble team have always been there to answer all my questions and provide support and advice. I can't fault the level of support I get from Kibble. They're only ever a phone call away if I need them, and the staff are very approachable and really help to give you confidence in yourself as a foster carer.

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Foster Carer's Stories

Norma's Story continued

It's really important for me to be engaged with my local community as a foster carer, to challenge prejudices about looked after children. People have these preconceived ideas about who these children are, but I've long since learned that children in care are just ordinary boys and girls that need a bit of extra help and support.

I've had a fortunate life, and it's important to me to give something back to those who haven't been so lucky. It's very different from looking after your own children, but if you want to do this and you think you can, what's stopping you?

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Foster Carer's Stories

Carolanne's Story

Carolanne has been a full time foster carer for six years, and is currently looking after Aaran who is 13.*

Fostering a young person with Kibble is an amazing opportunity to change someone's future. I would recommend it to anyone!

Of course, it's not without its challenges, but the rewards are far greater than most other careers. To be able to give Aaran, and other children we've fostered, experiences they never imagined possible is incredible. Christmas is a particularly special time – seeing their faces light up when 'Santa has been', or taking them on their first holiday, is magical.

My husband James and I have a great relationship with Aaran. We're a team and we do a lot together as a family unit, like trips to the cinema, or walks in the country near our house. Our extended family are also involved; essentially you become a family that fosters! Aaran is an inquisitive wee boy and enjoys learning new skills – James is currently teaching him woodwork and metal craft. It's taken a while, but we've gained Aaran's trust and it's great to see him happier and more settled.

I ensure that Aaran has clear boundaries and knows what we expect from him, as well as him from us. He understands that the boundaries are there for his protection and guidance, because we care about him.

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Foster Carer's Stories

Carolanne's Story continued

The level of support from Kibble is second to none. You're not left to do the job on your own; there's always support and advice on hand when you need it. Aaran also has a dedicated key worker, who's a great support both to Aaran and to us. When Kibble say they offer 24/7 support, they mean it.

It's fair to say that fostering has changed my life. It's a full time job, and your routine and lifestyle naturally change as a result. I really enjoy it and we wouldn't be without Aaran. For me, fostering is a hugely rewarding career and definitely beats the nine to five routine!

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A Day in the Life of a Foster Carer

Jacob is a lovable, outgoing, and inquisitive eight year old boy who's been living with us for over a year now. Life with Jacob in our home is incredibly rewarding and he is very much a part of our family. However, that's not to say that it hasn't been without its challenges, but despite this, we wouldn't change it for the world!*

I've put together a reflection of a day with Jacob living with us.

06:00 Jacob is particularly energetic this morning, bouncing around the living room so we get up with him. We try to encourage him to settle down and watch cartoons which he manages for about 10 minutes before becoming distracted.

09:15 I head out the door to school with Jacob but he is unsettled as he wants to attend the Children's Hearing which is taking place today. It was agreed with his care team that it would be a difficult hearing for him and it would cause him too much anxiety.

10:50 I arrive at the Children's Hearing waiting room. Both parents have already arrived and we have a quick chat. It's not always been easy; however I now have a good working relationship with Jacob's parents. Our supervising social worker is also there, along with Jacob's social worker.

12:30 The hearing has been lengthy and emotional, especially for Jacob's parents. There is a lot of conflict and as a result the hearing has been continued, awaiting

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further information. This means no decision has been reached. I worry about how this is going to impact on Jacob. We have a quick chat with our supervising social worker, before heading off for a bit of lunch.

15:00 I collect Jacob from school. He immediately asks what happened at the Hearing. We explain that no decision was made and he immediately withdraws and remains quiet for the rest of the journey. When we arrive home he goes straight to his room. I decide to give him his space and let him come to me when he is ready.

17:00 Jacob doesn't eat much for dinner and is still very quiet. He has not spoken much and decides to go back to his room to watch TV. I am worried about him as he is clearly upset. My instinct is to go and cuddle him and tell him not to worry, that everything will be OK. However I know that he needs time on his own when he's upset.

20:30 Jacob is very quiet at bedtime and refuses a story. Shortly after saying goodnight we hear a noise and I go to check on him. Jacob is staring out of the window sobbing. I spend some time comforting him and trying to reassure him. After an hour he eventually settles and falls asleep. It has been a difficult day for everyone and we are exhausted and upset. It is difficult to hear a child cry so hard. I worry what will happen if a decision is not made soon.

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Young People's Journeys

Jamie* (7)

Arran Villa Care Home/ Intensive Fostering Services

Jamie is a friendly, active seven year old boy who was in foster care for over two years before moving to Arran Villa. Sadly his birth mother was unable to look after him due to severe addictions and mental health issues which affected her ability to provide Jamie with the care he needed. From a difficult past, Jamie has overcome significant obstacles and is now settling well with a foster family.

When Jamie initially moved to foster care, he found the adjustment very difficult. He was in three foster placements, all of which were disrupted due to the challenges his behaviour presented to his carers. At times, Jamie would speak of feeling sad and hating his life. He tried to hurt both himself and those around him, which his foster carers found very upsetting and hard to manage. They did not feel they could continue to care for Jamie due to the level of support and supervision he required.

Jamie's social worker believed it was in his best interests to spend some time at Arran Villa – a care home for children and young people. The staff care team at Arran Villa were available to support Jamie 24 hours a day. At that time there were four other children at Arran Villa aged between five-12 years old who also came from challenging backgrounds like Jamie.

Children at Arran Villa have dedicated support workers who work alongside the children to set, and help them achieve their goals, whilst overcoming challenges. For Jamie, this meant learning to live with others and trying to understand and manage his feelings about his birth family.

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Young People's Journeys

Jamie was introduced to short breaks foster carers who worked closely with Arran Villa staff. They had a role in assessing how he could be managed within a family again. Jamie spent two nights a week at the short breaks carer's home and was very positive about this experience.

Jamie's social worker met with him and the care staff regularly, and was very encouraged by the positive feedback. Whilst Jamie continued to express confusion about his past, he seemed more settled generally. He interacted better with the other children in Arran Villa although he said he did not want to live with them anymore. Instead, Jamie wanted to live with a family, join a football club and have his own friends and a large bedroom full of toys.

Kibble's Intensive Fostering Service, along with Jamie's social worker, identified foster carers that were suitable to care for Jamie. The carers, Janet and Ken, were both in their mid-50's with two adult children who lived out-with the family home. Janet worked full-time as a teacher, whilst Ken gave up his job as a chef in a local restaurant to become a full-time foster carer. After a period of introductions and visits Jamie moved to his new foster placement.

Janet and Ken both say that fostering Jamie has been a rocky journey but also very rewarding. They talk about their satisfaction when Jamie achieves what might seem like small things such as the first time he slept through the night, or when he learned to ride his bike without stabilisers. They acknowledge that whilst they are still getting to know Jamie, they have taken great pleasure from seeing his personality and sense of humour emerge. Although they know that there will be challenges ahead in fostering, they feel happy about the level of support they receive from staff and other carers.

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Young People's Journeys

Susan* (14) **Intensive Fostering Services**

Susan is a happy, outgoing young person who has been living with her foster carer, Sandra, for four years now. Life for Susan has not always been happy and from a young age she was subjected to physical abuse from her birth parents. She has managed to overcome significant challenges in her life thanks to the support of Sandra, and the love and patience she has shown her.

Susan had a difficult and unhappy childhood. She had experienced five different foster placements before arriving to stay with Sandra. Most of these were a result of foster carers' circumstances changing. Susan believed that things didn't work out because nobody wanted her to live with them. She found the transition of moving to new carers very difficult and her behavior could present challenges. Susan thought that there was no point in getting attached to the carers as they would reject and send her away anyway. The foster carers described how verbally and physically abusive she was towards them.

Susan had come into the care of the local authority aged eight years, following disclosure at school of sexual and physical abuse from her birth parents. She has two older siblings, both of whom were also removed from their birth parents and placed in care. Her brother and sister now have their own homes but maintain contact with Susan.

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Young People's Journeys

Due to Susan's troubled past, her social worker recognised that for her next placement, Susan's carer would require additional support to be in place. The social worker met with staff from Kibble's Intensive Fostering service to discuss Susan's needs. She felt that the level of outreach support for the young person and carer, as well as supervision and attending meetings with other foster carers, would increase the likelihood of the placement's success.

Sandra worked in social care before deciding to change her career and become a foster carer. She had a wealth of experience in working with children and young adults at risk, so this career choice was ideal for her.

When Susan initially moved to live with Sandra, she presented lots of challenges through her behaviour. Sandra recalls how Susan would shout and swear at her and threaten to run away, sometimes disappearing for hours at a time. She accessed additional support from Kibble and emphasised to Susan that she was not going anywhere, this was her home and Sandra wanted her to stay. Sandra acknowledged that this was not an easy time for either her or Susan, however gradually there were changes that gave her hope.

Susan moved to a local school and began making friends. She spoke of her future and wanting to work with animals when she was older, and benefited from attending weekly art therapy classes at Kibble. Sandra says she can't imagine her life without Susan now and whilst fostering has challenged her in so many ways, she believes the rewards have more than exceeded this.

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Young People's Journeys

David* (19) **Adult Placement Service**

David is a talented young man who has been living with foster carers, Alison and Aileen for seven years. David has experienced a challenging past and was removed from his birth family aged six when his mother passed away and his grandparents were unable to look after him. Thankfully, with the right support and loving foster placement, David has turned his life around and has a promising future ahead of him.

David experienced three different placements before arriving to stay with Alison and Aileen. Initially, David voiced his unhappiness at staying with the couple and tried to sabotage the placement through destructive behaviours. Alison and Aileen reflected on the early days when David would regularly damage property in his room and make holes in his clothes, as well as refuse to wash himself. They emphasised to David that the items and clothing could be replaced and they still wanted him there, although they would like him to stop damaging things. David was excluded from his school for his disruptive behaviour, getting into fights and vandalizing school property.

David was found a new placement at Kibble Education and Care Centre as a day pupil and discovered that he was good at music and drama. The smaller classes seemed to work better and he began to take pride in his achievements.

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Young People's Journeys

David learned how to play the guitar, encouraged by Alison at home too. He found ways of expressing his feelings through drama and has been the star performer in the Christmas pantomime for the last two years.

After completing his education at Kibble School and gaining his qualifications, David has been working in one of Kibble's social largest social enterprises where he is gaining invaluable employability skills and experience.

David is planning to attend college to pursue his dream of becoming an actor. He is able to reflect on the challenges he has overcome in life and is grateful for the belief and commitment shown by his foster carers, Alison and Aileen throughout the years.

*Please note the names have been changed to protect the young people's identities.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Do I need a spare room to foster?

A. Yes. In order to foster with us, you are required to have a spare bedroom. We ask our planned short breaks carers to have two spare rooms in order that they can provide short-term care for up to two young people at a time.

Q. What experience do I need?

A. To foster with Kibble, you would be required to have at least three years' experience of providing childcare in a family, voluntary or professional setting. Foster carers must have an interest in, and enjoy working with young people. They will need to deal patiently with challenging behaviour and have an understanding of the needs of young people going through adolescence who have the added difficulty of disrupted family situations. A commitment to valuing and respecting children and young adults is essential. You don't require any previous qualifications to become a foster carer - we provide a comprehensive training programme.

Q. What training do you offer?

A. All full time carers must complete an HNC in Childcare and an SVQ in Social Care. You will also be required to undertake other mandatory training. There will be lots of support offered to help you to meet these requirements.

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FAQs

Q. Am I too old to foster?

A. Your age is not really relevant when deciding to foster. Many people choose to wait until they are older before becoming a foster carer. The advantage of this is you will have a wealth of life experience. Your health is far more important than your age. As children and young people can be very active, it is important that you are physically fit.

Q. I have health issues; will that stop me from fostering?

A. Not necessarily. All applicants will undergo a full medical assessment to determine if they are fit to foster. All applicants are treated equally and only conditions that would impact on your ability to meet the needs of a young person placed with you would prevent you from fostering. Health conditions that could be exacerbated by becoming a foster carer, therefore putting your health at risk, would also exclude you. If you are unsure then it would be best to discuss this early on with one of our service managers.

Q. Can I foster if I have a criminal conviction?

A. All foster carers undergo a Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check. We need to know about all criminal convictions, and this is determined at an early stage of the process. While not all convictions will prevent you from proceeding, there are certain convictions that would prohibit you from becoming a foster carer. Please do not assume that your situation excludes you without discussing it with our fostering team first.

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Q. Will I have a say in which young people I foster?

A. We will take care to ensure any young person placed with you is well matched to the needs of both you and the young person. Ultimately a foster carer has the right to turn down placements.

Q. What if there is an emergency?

A. We have dedicated emergency short breaks workers who will support you through an emergency or placement breakdown. Support can take many forms from a phone call to short breaks care, depending on the situation.

Q. I want to work with babies is that possible?

A. The age range for our fostering service is 5-25. If you are interested in fostering babies, we would recommend you contact another fostering agency, or local authority, that works with children of that age range.

Q. Am I allowed to take a young person on holiday?

A. Yes, if this is agreed by the young person's care team. We would want the child or young person to have the same opportunities as others not in care.

Q. Do children stay in contact with their birth families?

A. Contact with birth families can be very important to our young people. There are various types of contact which can include indirect contact (e.g. letters or cards), or direct contact such as time alone with the family, or supervised contact.

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Often there are meetings to attend such as progress meetings, LAAC (Looked After and Accommodated Child) reviews, Children's Hearings etc. and the parents along with the foster carer are often in attendance at these too.

Q. Can I still keep my current job and foster too?

A. This depends on the type of placement you wish to offer. For full time foster carers and planned short breaks carers, we would ask that your focus is on the young person/young people in your care and that you have no other employment. Because of this we offer very generous professional fees and allowances. The only exceptions to this are the pro-rata and adult placement carer roles where you may be in other employment.

Q. I am not doing this for the money, however if I have to give up my job I need to know how much I will be paid?

A. Of course. We understand that no one does this for money, but it is essential to know that you can still meet your commitments. The fees vary depending on your role.

Full time foster carers will receive a professional fee of approximately £27,000 pa along with approximately £11,000 in allowances for the young person in their care. This is a total income of £38,000 pa.

Full time planned short breaks carers receive approximately £20,000 pa, along with any allowances for children in their care.

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It is important to note that the allowance always follows the child. If you take short breaks then the short breaks carer will receive the allowance for the child. You will retain your professional fee.

It is also important to understand that as a foster carer you are self-employed and will have to complete your own tax returns. You will receive informal help with this via other carers. The Fostering Network also run free workshops on this. Foster carers are given generous allowances when it comes to tax.

Q. Will I get any holidays?

A. Yes. All of our carers receive 28 days paid short breaks per year. The exception to this is pro-rata carers.

Q. How long does the process take?

A. This can depend on various things. However as a general rule the process can take approximately six months.

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Our fostering team is located at:

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