

# Help a child blossom

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**Not sure about which career you want to pursue? We talk to people in a range of jobs and ask them about their occupation's pros and cons and the skills they need.**

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*Eleanor Meade, of Folkestone, was a foster carer until she started her own fostering agency, Family Matters Fostering, in Folkestone. It can be contacted on 01303 210029.*

## **Job description**

As a foster carer you are looking after a child in your home, a child who can no longer live with their own family. It does involve working with other people who have more influence in the child's life than you do.

## **How many hours do you work?**

It's a full-time job, so 24 hours, seven days a week. At Family Matters Fostering you can get time off if you want, although some fostering organisations don't allow this.

## **Annual salary bracket?**

There is no annual salary, but you get paid every week for each child you look after. You would get somewhere between £360 and £420 a week, per child, but a portion of this is obviously spent on the child.

## **What made you pursue this career?**

Our children had told us to go for it, and when we moved into a bigger house, we did. When you have grown-up children, they can persuade their parents they still have a lot to offer.

## **What training and qualifications do you need/have you got?**

There are no special qualifications needed. You are trained by your individual fostering organisation. Many use the Skills to Foster

course published by the Fostering Network. The approval process is long – it can take about six months. You must be assessed by a social worker and undergo checks by the local authority and Criminal Record Bureau. Once you have undergone training, checks and references, you appear in front of a fostering panel.

## **What skills do you need?**

You must have stability in your life, be able to work as part of a team, have physical space, some experience with children, a sense of humour, patience and be able to detach yourself from difficulties you may face.

## **What's an average day?**

You may be at home while the child is at School, or you may have meetings with professionals, such as social workers. You may have to meet guardians or parents, or go to court with your foster child. You will have to keep a diary every day and you have to attend a training session once a month.

## **Best things about the job?**

You can work from home and there's a great camaraderie among other foster carers. Probably the best thing though, is when a child settles in with you and really blossoms.

## **Worst things about the job?**

Sometimes it can be relentless and it's your life, not just a job. It's also not nice when things go wrong in a child's life and you are powerless to do anything.

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## **What do you need?**

If you are thinking of fostering you must do your research thoroughly. Go to organisations such as the British Association for Adoption and Fostering ([www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk), 0207 4212600) or the Fostering Network ([www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net)) to find out more. You can also contact your local authority or independent fostering organisations. Go to [www.fml.org.uk](http://www.fml.org.uk) or phone 01303 210029 to find out more about Family Matters Fostering.