

**Hello, my name is Karen. I am 39 years old, a wife and a mother of four children, whose ages range from 18 to seven years. I live in Southowram on the outskirts of Halifax and I am a Foster Carer.**

I have been a Foster Carer for almost three years now and I enjoy every second of it. I have, so far, fostered only one child at a time, from babies to toddlers.

Previously, I worked in a local school with SEN children and thoroughly enjoyed it. I left to have a baby, followed very closely by her two siblings. As my husband's business grew I went to work with him. After five years at this I decided I wanted to return to working with children. I completed a child-minding course with a view to establishing a career as a child-minder, however, I wasn't as committed as I thought I should be.

I had always wanted to be a Foster Carer and to make a real difference to the lives of children, but I had never really looked into the possibility that I could. My child-minding mentor was aware of my desire to foster and so they referred me to Safehouses Fostering and I am so glad that they did.

After researching other agencies as well, I chose to foster with Safehouses Fostering. I felt that, for me personally, it was important to choose a local agency, staffed by local people, looking after local children. I like to be part of a team and to meet people, so it was crucial that I could contact staff 24/7 and that there was an office I could pop into whenever I needed to.

The support I have received from Safehouses Fostering is amazing. I never feel alone and can contact someone whatever time of the day or night. I also have a pretty fantastic Supervising Social Worker, Joanne, who guided me and my husband through the assessment process and has been with us for the whole journey so far!

The training is excellent. I am now fully trained from First Aid to Filial Play, plus a host of other relevant subjects which are too numerous to list. I have just started my level 2 Certificate for the Children and Young People's Workforce (QCF) with a view to progressing to the level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce. I thoroughly enjoy training and get to meet other Foster Carers at the same time.

The 'ups' of being a Foster Carer are very similar to the 'ups' of being a parent. The first steps; learning, developing and achieving goals. It's just that these goals can be a little further from reach when a child or young person first comes into care.

The only 'down' side I have experienced so far was saying goodbye. I knew it wouldn't be easy but, boy, did I under-estimate that one. It wouldn't stop me doing it again though.

I would say, don't just think about being a Foster Carer. Act! Talk to a Fostering Agency or a Local Authority about your desire to foster and attend their Introduction to Fostering Training Course. Be brave and find out if fostering is for you.

It's a very rewarding feeling to give love, care, support and a safe environment to a child or young person who needs it and this in turn provides the foundation for a much brighter future. I believe my own fostering family and my fellow Foster Carers change lives every time we open our homes to vulnerable children.



**If you would like more information on a career as a Foster Carer please visit  
[www.safehousesfostering.org.uk](http://www.safehousesfostering.org.uk)  
or telephone 08453 700 247.**