



The poster features the Cumbria County Council logo at the top. Below it, the text 'Cumbria County Council' is repeated. The main heading on the poster is 'Become part of Cumbria's biggest family'. There are three testimonials from fostered children: Adam, aged 16, Claire, aged 14, and Matt, aged 16. Each testimonial includes a small photo of the child and a quote. At the bottom of the poster, the website 'cumbria.gov.uk/fostering' is listed, along with social media handles for Facebook (@cumbriafostering) and Twitter (@FosterAdopt). The slogan 'Serving the people of Cumbria' is at the very bottom.

Fostering friendly employer

Become a fostering friendly employer

Help support Cumbria's looked after children

Our foster carers have an important role. A supportive and flexible employer enables foster carers to balance their work and caring responsibilities to meet the needs of the children they care for.



What is fostering?

Fostering is a way of providing a family life for children who cannot live with their own parents.

Often children will return home once the problems that caused them to come into foster care have been resolved and that it is clear that their parents are able to look after them safely.

Others may stay in long-term foster care, some may be adopted, and others will move on to live independently.

Who are the children?

There are around 600 children in foster care, of all ages (0-18 years of age) and from various cultural and social backgrounds, who are placed in foster care for many different reasons.

They have a variety of unique needs and our carers, are required to provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment and give these children the opportunity to live their life to the full.



Gillian and Wayne's Story

Fostering was something Gillian and Wayne had both been interested in for some time, but didn't feel they could commit to whilst both working full time. Then they discovered they could foster in the form of 'respite' or 'approved support care', whilst still holding down their positions at Morgan Sindall and Sellafield. Both of their employers are supportive and fostering friendly.

Sellafield Ltd provided Wayne with special leave to attend the assessment and for any subsequent training, Wayne's Line Manager also provided support when he needed to work flexibly for a short period with respect to start and finish times. Morgan Sindall also support up to 5 days additional paid leave for training and flexibility where appropriate.

Gillian and Wayne can now commit to one weekend per month fostering, with an age range of two to twelve year olds. The majority of their placements are arranged well in advance, with some children staying on multiple occasions. By committing to one weekend per month, it enables Gillian and Wayne the flexibility of spending time with their family as well as fostering.

Fostering friendly policies - ideas for employers

Our carers have an important role as part of the professional team around the child. A supportive employer will enable foster carers to balance their work and caring responsibilities.

How you can help

Time off for training

Anyone interested in fostering must go through a robust assessment process and intensive training before they can be approved as foster carers. Employers can support staff interested in fostering by giving them time off to attend pre-approval training which is approximately five days usually spread over a number of weeks.

Flexibility

Foster carers need to be able to respond to the needs of the children in their care. They are an important part of the team supporting the child and must be able to attend the regular meetings about the children they care for. Access to flexible working, swapping shifts with colleagues or similar could really help foster carers to do this.

Emergency leave

The unexpected happens. Providing foster carers with the same access to emergency leave as parents, and recognising fostered children as dependants, like any for any other parents, will enable foster carers to provide a stable and secure home for the children they care for.

Celebrating fostering

Your business could help celebrate and support foster care by:

- Making information about how to become a foster carer available on noticeboards, intranet sites or internal publications.
- Hosting an information session for your staff (we'll help!) about fostering and explain the support you offer.
- Providing space in your office or store during Foster Care Fortnight (held every May) to support the drive to raise awareness and recruit new foster carers.
- Helping us provide support services and social events for local foster families.

In some cases business demands might mean not all changes are possible. This is not one size fits all, our aim is that employers consider the needs of foster carers and do what they can to help. The reality is that a very small number of people apply to become foster carers each year, while the impact on your business would be minimal, the impact on our ability to recruit foster carers could be significant.

Benefits of joining the scheme

- Build on your brand - Send a message to potential customers that you are fully committed to looking after staff and the local community.
 - Show strong corporate social responsibility. People in Cumbria have a strong connection to Cumbria, and being seen to look after the wider community sends a clear message that you are responsible company with a long term commitment to the area.
 - Supporting staff builds morale.
 - Promote your commitment to work life balance.
 - You will have access to advice information and support on helping staff who are or are becoming foster carers.
 - Use the fostering friendly employer logo on recruitment material.
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Cumbria County Council will:

- List you on our website in a fostering friendly employer directory.
 - Announce your membership on our website.
 - Announce your membership on social media.
 - Provide support on raising awareness of fostering internally at your company.
 - Advert in foster carer newsletter.
 - Listing and further information on company in foster carer log on section.
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Ready to join in?

Email the county council's
Communications Team at
media@cumbria.gov.uk

