

Children of all ages come into foster care in challenging circumstances and while some babies' parents may place them into care voluntarily, others may arrive because they have suffered abuse at home, neglect or have been impacted by the drug or alcohol problems of their birth parents.

### Considerations when fostering a baby:

Fostering any child requires a lot of energy and focus however fostering babies incorporates additional tasks such as night feeds and soothing. Furthermore babies in foster care may have additional care needs because of their experience of attachment or their pre-birth exposure to drugs or alcohol. Babies who have been impacted by their parent's drug or alcohol problems are often premature, underweight and more likely than other children to have serious medical problems, disabilities and developmental delays.

When babies and toddlers are placed in care, the Trust's care plan is usually to work towards their return to their birth family. Contact with birth parents can be very frequent to allow the birth parents the opportunity to develop their attachment relationship. Foster carers may be asked to work with the child's birth parents to enable them to be more confident and successful in looking after their children.

As babies require lots of interaction, engagement and affection, saying goodbye at the end of a placement can be very difficult. However, foster carers report their satisfaction in knowing that they have helped a baby through a difficult time in their life.

Due to the high levels of contact and additional care needs of a baby in foster care, it is preferable that foster carers have access to transport and at least one carer in the household is at home fulltime.

### Assessment:

Whether you plan to care for toddlers or teenagers, the assessment process is largely the same. When you apply to become a foster carer, part of your application will ask what age groups you would like to be considered to look after. During your assessment, your suitability for fostering different groups will be appraised, including identifying different strengths and weaknesses that can then be developed.

### Training and Support:

The Southern Trust's Learning and Development Programme incorporates training such as Child Development, Attachment, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) and First Aid for Babies.

Foster carers receive ongoing support from the child's social worker in addition to their allocated social worker from the Family Placement Service and paediatric health professionals.

All foster carers receive a weekly foster care allowance which includes provision for food, household costs, clothing, nappies and travel costs.

If fostering babies is what motivates you to consider fostering, there is a need for you. Call 028 37 560 750 to make an enquiry.