

Fostering North East

A project of St Cuthberts Care



Information for Purchasers



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About St Cuthberts Care

St Cuthberts Care, a regional charity, has been established 60 years and originally concentrated on the care and adoption of orphaned and abandoned children. Today our services stretch from Alnwick down to Middlesbrough and we work with children in need, vulnerable families, children and adults with learning disabilities and older people.

We offer residential and supported living accommodation, short stay and day care and social work and community development services to people in over 25 locations. We currently employ around 350 full and part time members of staff and 60 volunteers.



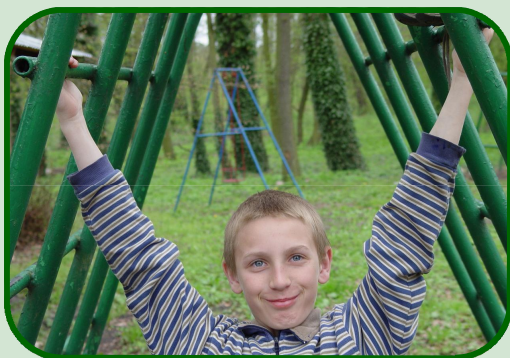
Our fostering service

The fostering service is a vital part of the social work function performed by St Cuthberts Care and one upon which we place great value. We have specialised in providing a fostering service since the 1950s and it has taken on even greater significance since we ceased providing an adoption service in 1996.

We work in partnership with Local Authorities throughout the region as well as existing St Cuthberts Care projects. We provide a varied range of foster placements for children that reflect their differing needs.

The success of our placements has been built upon matching the right family with the right child. Consideration is given to both the carers' and the child's wishes and feelings and an individual support and learning package is created for the carers and their family. This ensures that carers are given the level of support required to match the needs and demands of the child.

St Cuthberts Care's Fostering Service is registered as an Independent Fostering Agency under the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 (Registration number B030000494). As such the service is inspected by the Ofsted on an annual basis. St Cuthberts Care is a member of Fostering Network and BAAF — the UK national organisations for foster care, and of the North East Adoption and Fostering Consortium.





Statement of Function and Purpose

The Aims, Objectives and Principles of the Fostering Service

St Cuthberts Care is a Voluntary Organisation, which aims to provide a range of quality fostering services for children and young people who have various needs and disabilities.

The work of the fostering service is based on the principles underpinning **The Children Acts 1989 and 2004** and **The Human Rights Act 1998**.

In the belief that all children are best looked after in their immediate or extended families, the fostering service provides short-breaks to those families who are struggling with the demands of parenthood, and who need regular respite in order to enable them to continue to care for their children in the long-term. This service is particularly relevant for families where there is a child with physical disabilities, learning difficulties or other complex needs.

In keeping with the Welfare principle the fostering service also provides a range of placements for children and young people who are unable to remain within their families.

The role of all Agency foster carers is to enable children to develop to their full potential, through a positive experience of family life. The outcomes identified in **Every Child Matters** as being important for childhood and later life are a useful focus in this area. This fundamental role reflects the mission statement of the agency which states that:

St Cuthberts Care is a charity working for the common good by enabling people to develop to their personal potential.



AIMS:

- 1. To provide a programme of regular short-breaks to children, often with disabilities or high care needs, in order to prevent family breakdown.**

Objectives:

- To work in close collaboration with the Local Authorities who have assessed the children and families as in need of this service and obtain all the relevant information from them about the child and their needs
- To work closely with the child and their parents and ensure that the parents remain central to the scheme, for example by including them at all stages and consulting and obtaining feedback from them
- To ensure that carers offering this service receive relevant and timely training and specialist information as required to meet the often complex needs of the children

- 2. To provide all children who are placed in St Cuthberts Care's foster homes with a positive experience of family life**

Objectives:

- To work closely with foster carers to provide an environment in which the child is kept healthy
- To provide an environment where the child *is* safe and *feels* safe
- To promote a child's feelings of enjoyment and achievement
- To encourage foster children to make a positive contribution to what is happening to them and around them
- To encourage foster children to achieve economic well-being

- 3. To work in partnership with parents and birth relatives of children placed with St Cuthberts Care foster carers.**

Objectives:

- To provide clear information about the fostering services offered by St Cuthberts Care to birth parents of children placed in St Cuthberts Care foster homes
- To involve parents/appropriate relatives in introductory visits, Placements agreement meetings, and review meetings where this is in the best interests of the child.
- To obtain evaluation/written feedback from parents/birth relatives regarding the service their child is receiving.
- With reference to short-break services, to maintain the parental roles as pivotal to the scheme.



4. To support and promote foster carers in the often complex and demanding task of meeting the holistic needs of children in their care.

Objectives:

- To provide ongoing training for all carers, based on an assessment of their individual experience and needs.
- To provide all carers with a named support worker to work closely with themselves and their families.
- To organise a programme of regular training and support groups for carers so that they can meet together in formal and informal settings, to gain new knowledge and skills, to share experiences and to learn from each other.
- To operate a 24 hour support-line
- To listen to carers' views at all stages and to obtain feedback about the service in order to continually strive to make improvements.

5. To work in close partnership with Local Authority personnel who place children with St Cuthberts Care carers.

Objectives:

- To provide Local Authorities with accurate information about the schemes and costs for those schemes, offered by the Fostering Service.
- To attend introductory and planning meetings with and/or on behalf of the carers.
- To attend statutory reviews and Case Conferences with and/or on behalf of the carers.
- To work together with the child's social worker to ensure the child's needs are kept central at all times.



Range of Fostering Services

Short break fostering

This is generally a planned, organised service where a child or siblings stay with carers on a regular basis, maybe one or two weekends a month and sometimes extra in holiday periods.

The fundamental purpose of short break care is to assist parents to continue to care for their child at home for as long as possible by offering a structured package of breaks. This service is particularly beneficial to families where the children have special needs, eg. physical disabilities, learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural problems.

The service benefits the child by offering new relationships and experiences and a widening of their social circle. It benefits the parents by giving them a break and time to spend with other children in the family.

This service can be of great benefit to children and young people in residential schools who have no family contact. The short breaks in specially selected foster homes can offer the children invaluable experience of “normal” family life.

‘I foster a child and he has been part of our family for over three years now. He attends a residential school and could be accommodated there 365 days of the year if needed. For 408 hours he lives with us, that’s just 17 days a year... He becomes part of an extended family that enables him to be a son, brother, grandson, nephew and cousin, most roles people take for granted.

Every time I tell him to pick up his dirty socks or tell him his taste in music is awful I know we make a difference. How? Because it’s all part of normal family life and he loves it. His smile tells me all I need to know. And my reward comes every time I see that smile’

Dawn — Foster Carer



The short break service is also available to long-term carers who require a regular package of respite to enable them to provide the child in their care with a permanent home.

Carers receive specific training/input relating to the child's needs and they are expected to submit written feedback to the Agency after each visit. This is then made available to the child's social worker to enable monitoring of the service.

A Placement Agreement Meeting takes place at the beginning of each placement and the child will then be reviewed regularly by their Local Authority in accordance with Looked After Children regulations.



Temporary or short-term fostering

Temporary placements from several weeks or months to a year or more can be arranged, often at short notice if appropriate carers are available.

It is accepted that children placed under these circumstances will be very anxious, distressed even traumatised. Carers will receive a high level of support from the Agency in the initial stages of placement.

Close liaison with the Local Authority social worker is also necessary at this stage to elicit all the available information about the child, his needs and his background for the carers.

Contact is a main feature of short term care and St Cuthberts Care carers are expected to actively encourage and support this, where appropriate. Decisions will need to be made at the Placement Agreement meeting regarding venue, frequency and supervision of contact. St Cuthberts Care has a Contact Centre in the West End of Newcastle which may be appropriate when a neutral venue or supervision/observation is required.

Carers are expected to actively support the children and young people in relation to their educational needs and the Agency has access to an Education Advisor for support in complex situations. It is anticipated that the majority of children will be enrolled in a school near to their placement but in circumstances where it is in the child's best interests to remain at their current school, maybe until the end of a term, it is expected that the Local Authority would fund any transport costs.



Long-term or permanent placements

Long term placements can be arranged for children or young people where they will receive care and support through to independence.

Unlike most short term placements which are generally emergency situations, placements for permanent care are carefully planned and introductions are scheduled over a period of time depending on the child's and the carers' needs.

Permanent placements are generally available for children over the age of eight to ten years as it is hoped that younger children's futures will be secured by adoption.

There may be situations where long term placements are required for younger children who have specific medical needs or physical disabilities and the Agency has been successful in the provision of a number of these placements in recent years.

Contact is generally also an important feature of long term care and is actively promoted and supported by carers, where appropriate.

The Agency places a high degree of importance on permanent carers meeting the educational needs of young people placed so that each child is encouraged to attain his or her full potential.

Permanent carers are expected to assist the young people in their care with independence skills and to ensure they are fully consulted about decisions and plans for their future.

Because young people placed in permanent foster homes tend to have more complex needs a high level of support is available to the carers.



Training for Foster Carers

We wish to give carers as much support and training as possible to ensure that they feel confident in carrying out the type of fostering that they have chosen.

The initial preparation groups provided by St Cuthberts Care are aimed at giving prospective carers an introduction to the different aspects of fostering. It is important that all sessions are attended (there are usually four) and that both partners attend, where applicable.

Issues covered by the training groups include:

- Child development
- Loss and separation
- Feelings of birth parents
- Child protection
- The different types of abuse and how these can affect children's behaviour.
- Managing difficult behaviour
- The impact of fostering on yourself and your family and how to ensure Safe Caring
- Allegations against carers

The training includes input from experienced carers. Further specific topics are offered for carers interested in providing care for children with disabilities.

Following approval, carers' training needs are monitored regularly by their support worker and there are opportunities to access courses and develop knowledge from a variety of sources. These include:

- Courses offered by Local Authorities to carers and social workers
- St Cuthberts Care courses for carers, residential staff and social workers
- Distance learning from a variety of sources, including the NSPCC
- Courses provided by BAAF and the Fostering Network
- Bi-monthly carers' support/training group where the topics are planned a year in advance and based on carers expressed needs.

Training is viewed as an important part of St Cuthberts Care's support to foster carers, therefore it is an expectation that carers will attend a proportion of events over the year.

'We had six weeks of training which helped enormously. We knew that respite care would most suit our lifestyle and once you learn about disability, the reasons for it and how to handle it, it takes away the fear factor. There is quite a long matching up process which means you aren't thrown in the deep end and you have plenty of time to get all your questions answered.'

Mr & Mrs Green, respite foster carers



Support to Foster Carers

At St Cuthberts Care we believe that the main role of carers is to enable children and young people to develop to their full personal potential by providing them with a positive experience of family life. As this is such an important task we believe that carers deserve a high level of support from the beginning of their involvement with the agency, through the matching process, throughout the foster placement and beyond.

- On approval all carers will be allocated a named, qualified and experienced support worker who will support carers and their family members throughout the placements.
- Carers will be contacted by their support workers on a regular basis and can expect to receive a home visit at least once every two months—although frequency of contact may be as often as daily in very complex situations.
- Following approval carers are informed of their right of access to their personal files and that their supervision notes and any other contacts with the agency form part of these files.
- Regular telephone contact from the support worker is also very important and another member of the fostering team can be accessed by the carer should their own worker not be available.
- Carers have a 24-hour telephone helpline for advice or assistance out of office hours.
- All carers are covered by insurance policies arranged by the Agency. This includes an All Risks and Malicious Damages and Personal and Public Liability policy, to supplement the carers' own household insurance and Legal Expenses policy in the event of a criminal prosecution being brought against carers as a result of their fostering role. This policy also offers 24-hour access to Abbey Legal Line for



advice on any legal matter. Carers are made aware that car insurance is their responsibility and that the agency does not offer any cover in this area.

- Because allegations against anyone working in the childcare field is a very real possibility, St Cuthberts Care has arranged with a neighbouring Local Authority to provide an independent confidential advice and support service to foster carers who are
- Training is important in supporting carers and initial and on-going training is detailed overleaf. The bi-monthly training and support groups also have an informal element where carers can share ideas and difficulties in a confidential forum.
- Separate sessions of this group are organised for the children at the same time and this gives fostered and birth children the opportunity to mix together freely under supervision.
- Carers are provided with a copy of the Fostering Network magazine on a quarterly basis and are encouraged to become individual members.
- The issue of respite care will be discussed at the beginning of any placement and a decision taken based on individual circumstances. On occasions it may also become necessary to raise the issue during a placement if the need arises and all attempts will be made to negotiate successfully with the Placing Local Authority regarding this matter.
- Carers' reviews will be held annually or more frequently if required and will provide the opportunity for carers and their family to reflect on the previous year's fostering experience and identify any developments or changes which need to be considered for the year ahead.

Fostering Service Regulations 2002, Standard 21,22,23; Regulation 17



St Cuthberts Care Placement Costs

Placement costs are based upon a weekly contract price which varies according to a number of criteria such as the number of children being placed in care; length of care; any special requirements the child may have, etc.

Please contact our Fostering Manager, Liz Guest on **0191 24 24 804** for details, or email liz.guest@stcuthbertscare.org.uk

Some factors which may incur additional expenses

- Mileage costs incurred by the carer transporting the child between home and foster home.
- Carers will be expected to provide standard equipment (e.g. bed, bedding, storage etc.) for the child to be placed, appropriate to their age, ability and needs.
- It is expected that any specialised equipment will be provided by the referring Local Authority generally after an Occupational Therapist's assessment.
- At the Placement Agreement Meeting consideration will be given to any additional costs which may be met by the Local Authority. These could include mileage for contact or for transport to schools outside the area. Unforeseen costs may arise from time to time which may need to be discussed between the Agency and the Local Authority.
- These charges apply regardless of the age of the child.
- St Cuthberts Care will invoice the budget holder for the Local Authority on a monthly basis.
- Charges are reviewed annually at the start of the financial year and Local Authorities notified in writing accordingly.

St Cuthberts Care has passed the accreditation process for the Approved Provider List for Fostering Services for Newcastle, Northumberland and Gateshead Councils. Individual service contracts would need to be drawn up for all placements.



Criteria for higher rate charge to purchasers

1. Child has a specific disability.
2. Child has medical needs which require regular hospital attendance, administration of medication or medical procedures.
3. Child has been diagnosed with Mental Health problems or is receiving therapy for specific emotional or behavioural difficulties e.g. attachment disorder.
4. Child has been statemented as having Special Educational Needs.
5. Child has a history of known or suspected sexual abuse which results in child requiring higher than average level of supervision and support.
6. Child has a history of significant known or suspected physical or emotional abuse which results in child requiring higher than average level of supervision and support.
7. Child requires assessment services e.g. mother and baby placement, assessment of mother's parenting skills or in case of a teenager independence skills.
8. Child demonstrates significant behavioural problems over a period of time e.g. challenging, aggressive, sexually explicit, provocative, risky or offending behaviour.
9. Child's behaviour or level of ability/comprehension results in the child requiring higher level of care and supervision from carers than would typically be expected of a child of similar age.
10. Child displays on-going self-harming behaviours.



If you require further information about St Cuthberts Care Fostering Services please contact Liz Guest, Fostering Manager.

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MISSION STATEMENT

St Cuthberts Care is a charity working for the common good by enabling people to develop to their personal potential.