



Olive Branch
FOSTERING



Parent & Child
Fostering

Hello and Welcome



Every word, facial expression, gesture, or action on the part of a parent gives the child some message about self-worth.

Virginia Satir

What is parent and child fostering?

Parent and child fostering is where parents live alongside their children within a foster family. By placing a baby or child, along with one or both parents, in a foster home they can learn to cope with parenthood within a safe, nurturing, and secure environment.

Olive Branch receives requests for placements for a mother and child, a father and child, or both parents and their child.

Key requirements of a parent and child foster carer:

- To offer daily support and advice to parents about parenting their child, safely, over an agreed set period, for example, a 12-week period whilst a parent is being assessed by the local authority
- To help a parent and their child maintain their relationship as foster carers, you will support a parent, by modeling positive relationships, with the view of enabling a parent to develop a bond with their child.
- To provide emotional care and practical support and advice to parents and their children.
- As a parent and child foster carer, you will form part of a multi-disciplinary team that will include social workers, health professionals (such as midwives and health visitors), and any other professional involved in the parent and child's life.

Do I have the required skills, qualities and attitude?

Our parent and child foster carers draw on the practical skills, knowledge, and experiences they've gained throughout their personal and working life.

Some of the skills that make Olive Branch parent and child foster carers so great include:

- A passion for working with and supporting parents who may be vulnerable and at risk themselves and helping them learn how to look after their child safely.
 - A patient, warm and non-judgemental character.
 - A great understanding and a sense of humour!
 - Good communication skills. You'll need to be able to converse with a wide age range of people and work closely with other professionals involved, with the support of your supervising social worker at Olive Branch.
 - The ability to attend meetings and contribute to the assessments undertaken by local authority social workers, by keeping detailed records of what you observe.
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The term Olive Branch is often associated with the offering of peace usually after a turbulent time.
- Assisting parents to gain confidence in engaging with their child, and promoting the bond between them.
 - The ability, to support and guide the parents with tasks such as cooking, budgeting and self-care skills.
 - To demonstrate play, stimulation, warmth, and community engagement in parent and child groups and health appointments.
 - Observation skills to help record your daily activities and reflections of the parent when caring for their child.
- Guiding parents to help them improve their parenting skills and instill routines to assist them with this.
 - To support and promote contact for both parent and child if necessary (when a parent is under 18 years of age).

The beauty of this role is that no placement is the same and you will learn something new from supporting each parent and child placement.

Why work with Olive Branch Fostering?

Olive Branch was established in 2016 and since then we have supported hundreds of foster families and made a lasting impact on so many people's lives. This is what drives us to provide the best fostering service possible. We are a friendly and professional team that all work together to support our foster families.

Here are just a few reasons why our carers choose to work with Olive Branch:

- We have a diverse and amazing group of foster carers across the North West of England, from Lancashire down to Merseyside and across to Manchester.
- We closely support every single person in their role as foster carers. We know them all personally, we're one big family.
- Olive Branch offers all carers weekly contact and monthly supervision with their assigned supervising social worker.
- Every child and young person in our agency has a named Children and Young Person Engagement Officer (CYPEO) assigned to them when they join us. The role of the CYPEO is to remain connected to the child and parent, enabling wishes and feelings to be acknowledged and to cultivate a positive working relationship.
- We offer regular support groups and training tailored to carers' needs alongside essential training such as safeguarding, health and safety.
- We are committed to bringing fostering families together as much as possible, through events and activities that we organise throughout the year. Offering carers the opportunity to widen their network and join in the fun.
- Foster carers all have additional support from our Carer Connect lead. They will support you during your Form F assessment to become a foster carer, and connect you to other foster carers for your first 12 months. The Carer Connect initiative also includes regular get togethers for carers such as coffee and cake catchups (on us), newsletters and training.



Together we are stronger

A Foster Carer's Perspective

To hear what it's really like to be a parent & child foster carer with Olive Branch, here's a little insight from carers Cath and Karen.

What are the most rewarding aspects of parent and child fostering?

It's incredibly rewarding seeing a parent grow in confidence and self-esteem, proving to themselves just how capable they really are, helping them to achieve their goals and go on to live independently. We also love it if they keep in touch with us, sending regular updates and pictures showing their progress.

How did you start preparing for welcoming your parent and child?

We found out as much background history as possible including their likes and dislikes. We also put together a welcome pack including photos explaining who's who in our family, pictures of our house and their room, the surrounding area, and what's available to parents and babies in our community.

What things do you typically have to support the mum or dad with?

We help them to nurture and develop a secure and loving relationship with their child. Typical support includes things like sterilising everything properly, guiding them on safe bathing and sleeping, and offering help through the night. We also help them to prepare and cook healthy food for themselves and their baby, giving tips on freezing portions and budgeting to make life easier.

How much one-to-one time do you have with the foster child? How do you encourage the mum or dad to parent without support?

We have one-to-one time with the child if the parent needs a break or is struggling and getting overwhelmed, not only with parenthood but adapting to a strange environment. We encourage and support parents to develop the skills needed to build a healthy attachment with their child through meeting their everyday needs as well as loves and cuddles being able to engage with their child through reading, floor time, and stimulating play.

What are some of the biggest challenges in parent and child fostering?

One of the biggest challenges is building their trust. They may have preconceived ideas of us and their placement, we may need to break down barriers and help them deal with the extended family.

What training or experience did you have that helped you in your role as a foster carer?

We attended parent and child training which gave us an insight into these types of placements and what is involved. We also had paediatric first aid training. We were fortunate to have a parent and child foster carer to talk to us in depth about her experiences which gave us a realistic view of these types of placements. They also became our phone buddy who we could ring at any time if we needed advice or just a chat.

What 5 things would you say is most important about being a parent and child foster carer?

- Having the ability to take a step back and allow the mum or dad to parent.
- A great deal of patience.
- Recognising any risks to both but mainly the child.
- Honesty and transparency are very important.
- Having structures and boundaries.



Next Steps

If you're interested in becoming a foster carer and considering the role of a parent and child foster carer, here's a summary of the steps involved.

1. Get in touch with Olive Branch Fostering by telephone or complete an enquiry form on our website.
2. Once we've had a chat with you the next step is a brief home visit. We'll arrange this at a time that suits you and we'll be able to give you more details on the assessment process and we'll answer any questions you may have about fostering.
3. If you choose to complete an application form, this will be reviewed and if successful, allocated to an assessing social worker, and your assessment will commence. This is known as a 'Form F' and typically takes around 4 months to complete. Throughout this time your assessor will work with you to reflect on your past experiences, and the influences in your life and provide you with opportunities to learn and develop your understanding of the fostering role.
4. We will offer you training alongside other foster carers plus bespoke training for parent and child foster carers too.
5. To become a foster carer, regulations need to be adhered to. These include DBS checks per adult within the household, fostering medicals, reference checks from employers, friends and family, including birth children and the local authority, as well as any significant members of your network. All expenses will be covered by Olive Branch Fostering as part of the assessment process.
6. Once your assessment is complete, it will be presented to an independent panel, which you will attend with your assessing social worker. Here, you will have another opportunity to share your experiences and further demonstrate how you can enrich and enhance the lives of those you seek to support.



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