

Ella and Rhys

Well it's been 11 years since we started fostering, I can't believe it. I always wanted to foster but it took a few years to persuade Rhys. All our children were grown up and I suppose it was a bit like empty nest syndrome. We chose fostering because we wanted to make a difference in a child's life.

We are approved for short term placements of older children, although our main role has developed into providing Mother and Baby placements which we really enjoy. This role fits in well with our family since the placements are planned and are for a set period of time. I just love supporting the "Mums" and this way round I don't get too attached.

Mostly I support the mum with life skills, helping them to make good decisions and being available for that guidance and reassurance. Building their trust is the key to helping them to relax in our home and putting them at ease so they can come to us with any concerns.

Our family are great, my children are a massive support. My grandchildren are used to people coming and going and we always encourage the young mothers to join in any family activities.

My house is always busy with social workers and other professionals calling, so the kettle is always on!

All my mothers have their own stories to tell and make such an impression on us. They always leave a bit of themselves behind. I am so pleased if they get to take their babies home.

I have gained so much experience from doing this role. I have always been keen to access training and will take away any bit of advice and put it into practice.

Fostering Mother and Baby placements has had a massive impact on our daily lives, you have to be able to think on your feet and sometimes the role can feel a bit restrictive through the level of supervision and support these young mothers need.

Giving them the space and time to parent their child means everything. They have given us so much back in return through the life lessons they have taught us.

Drawing out and re-discovering the young person at a level they are comfortable with has been such a learning curve and trying not to "kill them with kindness" is really difficult for me, since they need to stand on their own two feet.

We both love what we do and would advise anyone thinking of doing this to keep an open mind. Perhaps start slowly and dip your toe in the water, maybe through respite or short breaks, to find out if it's for you. Since you won't know if you like it until you try it! So give yourself the chance to decide.