Fostering allows children and young people who are unable to live with their own parents the chance to thrive in a secure and loving family home.

Over the past few years the number of North Ayrshire children cared for in foster homes has risen dramatically and we now need more foster families than ever before. Fostering can be a way of offering someone else’s child a home until they can return to their own parents, or, when this is not possible, until they are settled into a permanent family.

The length of time children stay with foster families varies from one night to a number of years depending on their individual situation. As all children are unique, we require different types of foster carers and respite carers to meet their needs.

We have listed details of the fostering schemes we currently have within North Ayrshire. Full details of the financial support paid to carers on each of the schemes can be found in the Financial Support factsheet enclosed.
General Fostering

Short-term Foster Care

Short-term carers look after children of all ages, including sibling groups of two or more.

This may be for one night, a period of a few days or weeks, or up to two years depending upon the child's situation. We try to place children following careful planning with the child, their family and the short-term carer but sometimes children may require an emergency foster placement at very short notice.

Everything possible will be done to try and return the child home to their family as soon as it is considered safe to do so, however, not all children are able to return home safely. In situations like these, everyone works equally hard to find a permanent placement and to prepare the child to move to a long-term foster home or adoptive family.

Short-term carers work closely with the child, the child's family, and others such as Social Services and the Children's Panel. As it's a full-time job caring for other people's children, foster carers on this scheme are not permitted to have any paid employment.

A generous weekly allowance is paid to short-term carers for each child placed with them.
Long-term Foster Care

Long-term foster carers can look after children of all ages, including sibling groups. These children are unable to live with their birth families but may not be available for adoption, for various reasons. They still need families to care for them on a long-term fostering basis. It is anticipated that the child will grow up with their long-term foster carers and will remain there until the time is right for them to move onto independence.

These children or young people may still have contact with their family or siblings. This could be once or twice a year, or in some cases more frequently.

As with short-term fostering, a generous weekly allowance is paid to carers for each child placed with them.

Fostering Xtra

Specialist Fostering Scheme for Older Children

Fostering Xtra carers look after older children aged 10-16 years, or a sibling group who would otherwise have to live in a residential home or school. The main carer will have significant previous experience of caring for other people’s children and be prepared to undertake a formal childcare qualification (SVQ Level III) within two years of approval. They would also need to be at home full time.

As with the general fostering scheme, Fostering Xtra carers may care for a child for a short period of time, or until they reach independence, depending upon their situation. Fostering Xtra carers work closely with the child, the child’s family, and others such as Social Services and the Children’s Panel.

Extra support and training is provided for all Fostering Xtra carers. They are paid a fee, 52 weeks of the year in addition to an allowance for each child placed with them.

Respite Foster Care

Respite foster carers look after children and young people who already live in foster homes or residential homes. Care is needed for children for regular, short periods, usually at weekends and during the holiday periods.

The children placed with respite carers may come for a one-off visit, or they may be linked to a respite family and visit regularly. Respite carers look after the children so that the full-time carers can have a well-earned rest, or so they can spend time with other children in their family.

A generous allowance is paid to respite carers to cover the cost of caring for each child placed with them.
Fostering a Child Affected by Disability

Foster carers are needed to provide both short-term and long-term placements for children of all ages who are affected by a disability. These disabilities can include Autism, Down's Syndrome and learning disabilities. Some of the children have physical disabilities and some are wheelchair users. A number have hearing or sight impairments, or complex medical needs. Some of these children may have experienced abuse or neglect.

Although caring for disabled children requires an extra commitment, many of the tasks are the same as is required for carers of all children and young people. What the children want from a foster carer is someone they can trust and someone who understands their individual needs. They require stimulation and care that will enable them to reach their full potential.

Shared Care Scheme for Children Affected by Disability

IMPACCT is a family based respite scheme providing flexible short breaks to children and young people who are affected by a disability and who may also have complex health care needs. These children normally live at home with their own families.

IMPACCT carers offer care in their own home for children who are significantly disabled. Each carer is linked to four children and they offer each child around 42 days of care a year, usually at the weekends and during school holidays.

This valuable service has a dual benefit. It allows the child's family the opportunity to have a well-earned break, whilst carers provide new experiences for the child in a fully supported placement. Children and young people have fun and meet new friends whilst taking part in activities independently from their own families and this can help to build their confidence and self-esteem.

IMPACCT carers receive a generous retention fee, 52 weeks of the year. They also receive an allowance to cover the cost of caring for the children placed with them, and expenses for things like specialist equipment and travel.