

**FOSTERING MISCONCEPTIONS STOPPING ONE IN FIVE BECOMING CARERS  
CELEBS BACK FOSTERING RECRUITMENT DRIVE  
AS OVER 10,500 FOSTER CARERS NOW URGENTLY NEEDED**

- Misconceptions about fostering are preventing one in five people in the UK from potentially becoming foster carers
- These include being single, being too old, having a job and living with a disability
- Fatima Whitbread, Pandora Christie and Lemn Sissay have shared photographs of their younger selves to front a national recruitment drive for foster carers
- Over 10,500 foster carers now needed with demand highest in Sandwell (West Midlands), Devon (South West) and Telford and Wrekin Council (West Midlands)

One in five people in the UK (20%) don't believe they can foster due to misconceptions around fostering<sup>1</sup>, which is preventing people from stepping forward and helping some of the most vulnerable children and young people.

This is according to a new recruitment campaign led by National Fostering Group (NFG), the largest network of independent fostering agencies in the UK, which is calling on members of the public to consider fostering to help some of the UK's most vulnerable children.

Javelin thrower, Fatima Whitbread, radio presenter, Pandora Christie, and author, Lemn Sissay, all of whom have a history with fostering themselves are backing the campaign. Each of them has released a picture of their younger self during their time in foster care in support of the campaign.

The care system is at a critical point. New Freedom of Information data collected by NFG reveals 60% of councils in the UK have seen an increase in young people going into care in the last 12 months with 10,500 foster carers now urgently needed across the country<sup>2</sup> – a 50% increase on previous estimations<sup>3</sup>.

Research among UK adults found one in seven (14%) are considering fostering, but NFG says this number could be considerably higher if fostering was better understood.

**Steve Christie, Chief Executive of NFG said:** *“Many people perceive there to be barriers to becoming a foster carer that simply aren't true. We will consider people regardless of age, marital status, gender, sexuality, disability or employment status. Anyone who has room in their home and their heart could be a foster carer, and most of our foster carers say that fostering is the best thing they have ever done.”*

The biggest misconception stopping people among those who don't think they can foster, is the belief they are too old (34%) – in fact, the oldest carer with NFG is 80-year-old Anne from Belfast and many people foster in their 60s and 70s as well. Being single (13%), having their own children living at home (13%), working in another job (11%), and having a disability (9%) are also seen as barriers to foster - but these do not exist.

Other reasons preventing people from fostering include worrying that their home isn't big enough (20%), whether they can afford it (14%) and not fully understanding how fostering works (5%).

The Freedom of Information data shows over 70,000 children are in foster care and councils across the UK are urgently recruiting for more carers, with the highest demand in Sandwell (West Midlands), Devon (South West) and Telford and Wrekin Council (West Midlands)<sup>4</sup>.

Of the people in the UK who are considering fostering, 61% say it is because they want to help children and young people, 31% are aware of the need for more foster carers and 32% think they would be good at it.

Research among current foster carers in the UK shows that 78% find fostering a hugely rewarding experience and 62% have found a greater sense of purpose<sup>5</sup>.

**Steve Christie continued:** *“Fostering is challenging but it could be the meaning you’re looking for in life. And you can also earn £24,500 on average per child per year. If you think you could transform your own life and that of a child, please contact the National Fostering Group.”*

Typical fostering misconceptions:

1. I’m too old (34%)
2. I have my own children (13%)
3. I’m single (13%)
4. I work (11%)
5. I live with a disability (9%)
6. I have a dog/other pets (6%)
7. I’m too young (2%)
8. I am part of the LGBTQ+ community (1%)

**Fatima Whitbread said:** *“Foster carers offer children and young people a safe, loving and nurturing home when they can’t live with their birth families. This means they have a unique chance to make a real difference to a child’s life.”*

**Pandora Christie said:** *“Foster parents are fundamental in creating a safe home environment and support system for children and young people who find themselves needing care. The amount of futures they help to change and the difference foster parents can make to a child’s life is indescribable.”*

**Lemn Sissay said:** *“A child will test you emotionally, spiritually, financially, throughout your life, so to foster or adopt a child is the greatest thing a human being can do for another.”*

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**Notes to editors:**

1. According to online research conducted by Opinion Research on behalf of National Fostering Group between 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> August. Total sample was 2,000 UK Adults and is nationally representative.

2. Freedom of Information data collected between 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023. 128 out of 205 LA fostering agencies provided data. Recruitment figures for foster carers ranged from 0 – 610 in each council, averaging 53.52 per council.  $205 \times 53.52 = 10,972$  carers currently needed in the UK. 205 LA fostering agencies in the UK are made up of: [151 in England](#), [32 in Scotland](#) and [22 in Wales](#).

3. [Fostering Network data](#) reported a need for 7,200 more foster carers in May 2023
4. Freedom of Information collected across 128 councils within the UK. Data collected from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023. Over the last 5 years, an average of 74,462 children are in care each year.
5. Foster carer data according to online research conducted by National Fostering Group, between 14<sup>th</sup> June and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Total sample, 773 foster carers in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

### Top 20 Councils in the UK with the highest demand for foster carers

	Council	Foster carers needed
1.	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	610
2.	Devon County Council	327
3.	Telford & Wrekin Council	279
4.	London Borough of Haringey	200
5.	London Borough of Wandsworth	165
6.	Newport Council	162
7.	Surrey County Council	120
8.	Leeds City Council	100
9.	Flintshire County Council	98
10.	Vale of Glamorgan	90
11.	Buckinghamshire County Council	83
12.	Hampshire County Council	80
13.	East Lothian Council	79
14.	North East Lincolnshire Council	76
15.	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham	75
16.	Scottish Borders Council	73
17.	Essex City Council	60
18.	Hertfordshire County Council	60
19.	London Borough of Islington	60
20.	Suffolk County Council	60

### About National Fostering Group

With over 20 years of experience in foster care, National Fostering Group is the largest network of independent fostering agencies in the UK, with the largest community of foster parents. Across the country, we work with local authorities to provide high quality foster care to children and young people in need.

National Fostering Group is committed to building incredible futures for vulnerable children and young people in the UK by empowering them to be happy and make their way in the world. They achieve this by providing foster parents with excellent skills and genuine commitment, who can give children in need a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment where they can thrive and be happy.

For more information please visit: <https://www.nfa.co.uk/>