

Urgent need for foster carers in Greater Manchester as local foster parent reveals “it’s the best thing I’ve ever done”

- *Geoff Hodgson and Stephen Garry, foster carers with Fostering Solutions North West, speak about fostering being the best thing they’ve ever done*
- *Salford City Council has seen a 29% increase in the number of foster children in care since 2018 but the demand for additional foster carers remains high*
- *Fostering Solutions North West is calling for new foster parents to step forward as they announce another Outstanding Ofsted rating*

The number of children in foster care in Salford has increased 29% in the last five years¹ and today more than 80 additional foster carers are urgently needed. [Fostering Solutions North West](#) is appealing to those considering becoming foster carers to step forward and help provide more supportive homes for vulnerable children in the area.

Foster carers are encouraged from all walks of life, and of all ages, as diversity is key in meeting the needs of the many children that come into the care system.

Becoming a foster carer is a life-changing experience, not only for the child but also for the parents themselves. Manchester based LGBTQ couple Geoff Hodgson and his partner Stephen Garry first applied to become foster parents through Fostering Solutions North West, part of National Fostering Group, back in 2015 through which they fostered a nine year old boy.

An incident early in their fostering journey, involving a freak flood and losing their home, meant Geoff, Stephen and their foster child lived in a holiday home for six months. This accident, which could have ended in tragedy, helped to cement the bond between them and a troubled child who was handed a traumatic start in life.

Geoff said: *“He has flourished because of the love and security we provide. That is fostering’s biggest reward. There are so many children coming into care each month. If you can help even one of them, that’s massive. If everyone who’s ever thought about fostering could do this just think what a difference it would make! They just need a chance. I spent 35 years in the army and this is the best thing I’ve ever done.”*

Fostering Solutions North West, recognises the profound impact that foster parents like Geoff and Stephen can have on the lives of vulnerable children. That’s why the agency is so proud to have once again been awarded an Outstanding rating by Ofsted, after being awarded the prestigious rating in their previous inspection in 2018.

According to the Ofsted report, Fostering Solutions North West has remained committed to its principles by consistently demonstrating unwavering support to child-centred care and individualised support, with the report stating that, *“foster carers are extremely dedicated and show exceptional levels of commitment and resilience in caring for children who have experienced trauma and loss. This ensures that children flourish in all areas of their social and emotional development.”*

Additionally, the agency has actively promoted the voice of the child through initiatives like the Youth Council, ensuring that children's experiences and perspectives are integrated into the fostering process from the outset, aligning with their core principles of prioritising children's well-being and empowerment.

Cheryl Harris, Registered Manager for Fostering Solutions North West said: *“We want nothing more than to see the children in our care flourish and for us to be able to support them to reach their potential. We strive to continually for the sake of the children and to receive an Outstanding rating from Ofsted again reflects the quality of our care and our commitment to helping more young people in the area. We hope this will encourage more people to find out about fostering with Fostering Solutions.”*

The full report from Ofsted can be read at <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50230257>

Fostering Solutions North West is part of National Fostering Group, the largest network of independent fostering agencies in the UK.

- End -

Notes to Editors

1. Gov.uk website, [Main findings: Children’s social care in England in 2022](#), Accessed 11th October 2023
2. Freedom of Information data collected from Salford City Council on 13th July 2023

For further information, interviews and case studies please contact:

Third City - nfg@thirdcity.co.uk / Niamh Finnie, 07761669176 / Sophia Steinsberg, 07584 904466 / Susanna Francis, 07464 543695

About Fostering Solutions North West

Fostering Solutions North West works with more than 290 foster carers and over 390 foster children across the whole of the North West, from Cumbria down to the Staffordshire borders including Lancashire, Manchester, Cheshire East and West, St. Helens, Halton, Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, The Wirral and The Welsh Borders.

Fostering Solutions North West is a large agency that has been established for more than 20 years. They have a stable staff team and many of our foster carers have been with the agency for 15 years or longer. Keeping children safe is paramount and they do this by providing stable and secure homes and supporting young people to achieve whatever they are capable of.

For more information please visit: <https://www.nfa.co.uk/fostering-solutions/office/fostering-solutions-north-west/>

About National Fostering Group

With over 20 years of experience in foster care, National Fostering Group is the largest independent fostering agency 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/>