

A young man with dark hair, wearing a maroon button-down shirt, is leaning over a kitchen counter. He is looking at a laptop screen. A woman wearing a blue long-sleeved top and a maroon headscarf is sitting across from him, looking at an open book. The kitchen has wooden cabinets and a window with blinds in the background. The text "A safe space in a new place." is overlaid in large white font on the image.

**A safe space
in a new place.**

**A guide to fostering
and supported lodgings
for refugee children**

Your fostering journey starts here

Thank you for your interest in providing a place in your home for a refugee child seeking sanctuary in the UK. There are many children who need a safe place to call home for a few weeks, months or sometimes years as they take steps towards their future.

In this pack you'll find information about the children who need a safe space to stay and how you can help depending on where you live in the north west. We also answer some of the most frequently asked questions when it comes to fostering and supported lodgings, but if you have any more, please get in touch. You'll find all the contact details you need at the end of this pack.



A SAFE SPACE IN A NEW PLACE

Children arriving in the UK need a safe, caring place to call home. Somewhere they can settle for a few weeks, months or sometimes years as they take steps towards their future.

They're just children.

They arrive here from often incredibly traumatic situations – fleeing from war, persecution, violence and civil unrest. Some have been trafficked, many exploited as they made their way here. These refugee children arrive without parents or family to look after them. As a result, they may have emotional, cultural and practical needs – but you could be the one to help them reclaim their childhoods. They need a safe place to call home. They need to know that there is someone there for them.

You could provide that safe space in a new place. Providing a place in your home to a teenager who is in care or who arrives in this country with no family or safe place to stay. They want to be in education or training and you can be there to prepare them for the future and support them on their journey to independence.

You will be provided with support and training to help you care for these children. Understandably, there can be challenges, but you will have the help you need, when you need it.

Children fleeing war, persecution and violence need a safe place to call home. They're just children. They need to know that there is someone there for them.

OUR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who are refugee children and why do they need our support?

Refugee children are children or teenagers who have arrived in the UK, but without their parents or family. Often, they have arrived after fleeing desperate situations in their home country, such as war, persecution, violence and civil unrest. Some of the countries these children come from include Sudan, Iran, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Syria. Their parents may have sent them to the UK for safety. Or sadly, their parents may have died, leaving these children as orphans.

All children deserve a safe, secure place to live. They have a right to education, to make friends, to feel part of a community, and to build the networks that can help them in the future. We need foster carers and supported lodgings hosts – new and existing – to come forward and provide that safe space for as long as these vulnerable children need it. It may be days, weeks, months or years, but these carers can make such an incredible difference to children and teenagers in that time. We're asking people to offer their home as a refuge at a time of crisis and uncertainty, in a place that is strange and unfamiliar.

How old are the children that need a safe place to call home?

The children who need a safe, caring place to call home are usually teenagers. They're of the age where they will be in education, training or employment. Sometimes, a younger child may need foster care.

Where are their parents?

These children leave their country of origin for various reasons, including war and violence. For some their parents have been killed in the war and they flee. Others may become separated from their parents during their journey to seek safety. And some parents will have stayed in their country of origin, encouraging their children to travel alone to seek safety elsewhere. Some children will still have contact with their parents back home, but unfortunately some lose contact or have missing family members.



What is 'supported lodgings'?

Supported lodgings is offering a place in your home to a teenager who has been in care or who arrives in this country with no family or safe place to stay. These children need support in a new country, in new surroundings. They could well be afraid or alone in the UK, uncertain of what the future now holds.

As these children are older, they will be working towards having more independence. This means that you will be able to pass on life skills – such as cooking, home maintenance and basic financial advice – helping them to gain skills for independent adult life.

What if I don't speak the same language as the child?

Some of the refugee children speak a little English, some don't speak any. It's good to learn some phrases in their language to make them feel at ease if you can. But language need not be an issue. These children can still experience stability and safety, even with a language barrier.

You can use translation services and tools and we will support you to find a way to communicate with a child in your care so you can help them learn about life in the UK, make friends and settle into education. As a rule, these children are determined to learn English and watch films, television programmes and YouTube videos in English.



What if I'm not the same religion as the child?

Matching is completed with the best interest of the child and we make sure they're included in the matching process. You don't need to be of the same religion or cultural background as the child, but it's good to find out a bit more about their culture and beliefs. Having this conversation with the child can be a good way to bond too – sharing your experiences and explaining how it may be different in the UK. As foster carers you will have access to support and training around meeting the religious and cultural needs.

Some children thrive better in a non-religious match placement, so not speaking the same language or follow the same religion is not a barrier to placement matching. Placement stability and making sure they feel safe and supported has a higher priority.

Can I foster refugee children if I have my own children and/or foster children?

Yes! Lots of our foster carers find that their experiences have really helped them to support their foster children. They've had some great successes and learnt from the challenges – all of which goes towards giving children a good start in life.



Will I receive training/support to look after refugee children?

Yes! We'll provide specialist training to look after refugee children and are always on hand to support you as you need. We'll also give you information on the child's legal status and any steps that need to be taken as well as their background, so you can understand their situation and what has happened to them. The training is commissioned to specialise services including facilitators with lived experience of migration.

The training offer ranges from understanding the experiences of these children during their journey to the UK, to good practice in supporting separated children when they arrive here.

You'll find even more question and answers on our website at: youcanfoster.org/your-questions

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

These are the Local Authorities in the North West that are currently looking for supported lodgings hosts.

- **Blackburn with Darwen**
- **Blackpool**
- **Bolton**
- **Bury**
- **Cheshire East**
- **Cheshire West and Chester**
- **Cumberland**
- **Halton**
- **Knowsley**
- **Lancashire**
- **Liverpool**
- **Manchester**
- **Oldham**
- **Rochdale**
- **Sefton**
- **Salford**
- **St Helens**
- **Stockport**
- **Tameside**
- **Trafford**
- **Warrington**
- **Wigan**
- **Wirral**
- **Westmorland and Furness**

FOSTERING HUBS

- **Foster for Greater Manchester**
fosterforgm.com
- **Foster 4**
foster4.co.uk
- **Foster with us**
fosterwithus.org.uk

GET IN TOUCH

Email:

placementsnorthwest@stockport.gov.uk

or visit

youcanfoster.org/safespaces

“ To see that smile on children’s faces, to make a positive difference to their lives and put them on the right path – that’s what motivates us!”

Yunus, Foster Carer