

Fostering Stories

Introducing The Gloucestershire County Council Fostering Family

Visit www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fostering for more information and fostering stories.



Cynthia
Foster Carer for
Family Link Plus

Tell us a little about yourself

After working for the probation service and youth justice team, I started working for GCC in children's services and have been in the Family Link Plus team for the best part of a decade. My family are very important to me, and my other passions are baking, growing vegetables and fruit, living healthy, volunteering and travelling. I am proud of my cultural background and recently was fortunate to spend time in Jamaica enjoying the beautiful sunshine!

What inspired you to work for FLP team?

After working in the fostering team for five years, the opportunity arose for a secondment to the FLP team, as deputy team manager. During that time, I saw how special and unique this service is, and what a positive impact it has for the families involved. After a valuable and eye-opening stint in the safeguarding team in the disabled children and young people's service, I returned to FLP as team manager. I am so proud of the specialist service we provide in Gloucestershire to children with profound and complex needs.

What makes FLP so special?

The short breaks we provide give families a chance to rest and attend to important matters but also allow the children access to a number of opportunities, activities and exciting experiences in their local communities. We're a strength-based service; we focus on our children's abilities, not the barriers that might stop them thriving and reaching their full potential.

FLP is also unique because of its amazing foster carers and staff, some of whom have been with the team for years!

What do families think of FLP?

The feedback is always overwhelmingly positive. For example, one family said, "We would not be able to remain together as a family unit without the support from family link plus" and another said, "I can see the excitement and change in my child's body language when we mention the carer's name". Many parents report that their child had become more independent, learned many new skills, and was not so reliant on them for practical tasks. We are meticulous in our matching, so the links we make are stable and carers often become an extension to the family.

What do you feel you offer your carers?

Our team is set within the Fostering Service and is compliant with national standards and regulations. This means our carers can provide a diverse range of short break opportunities that support and safeguard our most vulnerable children and young people. Training is mandatory in areas such as first aid, paediatrics, moving and handling, and life support, and our very own nurse specialist provides extra training when required, for example with assisted feeding.

As well as training and development, we provide payments, a dedicated supervising social worker, local support groups, annual reviews, supportive fostering champions, appreciation events, family fun days, milestone awards, and opportunities to engage with senior leaders.

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