

Fostering Stories

Introducing The Gloucestershire County Council Fostering Family

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



Lou
Foster Carer for
Family Link Plus

Tell us a little about yourself

I was born and raised in Stroud. I met my husband, Nick, there before moving to Quedgeley when I was 19. We've been together for 33 years and have two children who are 25 and 23. I love travelling and taking care of people! We look after international students and teachers, provide support to adults through 'Shared Lives', and take care of disabled children and young people as a carer for the Family Link Plus team.

What inspired you to work for FLP?

I've always worked with disabled children including volunteering at St Rose's in Stroud. I encouraged my children to do the same; to be grateful for their health and to help others. We have a loving and caring family and we wanted to share that with others. I loved the fact that FLP not only helped people in their homes, but also connected them with people and services in the community. We were really happy to be accepted as carers!

How have you been supported by GCC?

The support from the FLP team and the rest of the GCC fostering service has been brilliant! The training is comprehensive and if you need specific training to support your linked child then the team will facilitate this for you. We also have regular local support groups where you can catch up with other FLP carers and learn from visiting speakers. Recently, I became a 'fostering champion', a rewarding role where I am able to get involved with fostering initiatives, help out at recruitment events and support new carers.

What are FLP short breaks like?

Typically, the arrangements are long-term and the FLP team are rigorous in their matching to ensure that it's the best option for the young person and the carers. The bonds that we formed are strong, it's hard to ever say goodbye! I remember the first child we supported was 3, and we worked with him for years and still help out occasionally today because the relationship is there. We cared for our second linked child for 9 years and did lots of wonderful activities with him to support both him and his family. I remember when his Nan went into hospital, we were able to juggle things around so that we could support him further which was really reassuring for her! She told us, "I can never thank you enough for what you've given me over nine years, and the experiences and care you have given him", which was lovely to hear! We still see him actually – he ran up to me the other day and hugged me!

They take matching very seriously at GCC and you will always be supported.

Your home must be lively?

It really is – People come and go all the time and some of the young people we help thrive because of this. Sometimes, disabled children can be a little isolated at home, so are grateful for new friendships and fun interactions with our children and other people we care for.

What advice would you give to someone thinking about becoming an FLP foster carer?

As an FLP carer you're able to provide freedom and flexibility for families, even if it's just for a few hours at the weekend or in school holidays. They take matching very seriously at GCC and you will always be supported.