

Fostering – frequently asked questions

How do I become a fosterer?

We advertise when we need more foster carers via our website. You can then start your application with us on our website. Alternatively, you can call the centre on 01225 787321 or email fostering@bcdh.org.uk to request a form to be emailed across, posted out or come on-site to fill one in at our Reception desk.

Successful applicants will then be notified as soon as possible, and we'll request some home photos to assess what kind of foster animal might be suitable. Our foster co-ordinator will then be in touch for a chat through our programme and start off your training to become a foster carer. Once you've attended one of our training events, we'll then match you with a foster animal in need. We offer a supportive service and aim to make sure our fosterers feel valued for their help as they make such a difference.

Do I need to have experience of fostering?

Although experience of fostering or ownership is desirable, it is not essential. We offer a comprehensive training programme and are happy to support those with the motivation and enthusiasm for animal care to become great fosterers.

What do foster carers do?

You'll be the care giver for an animal in need. Just like an owner, you'll need to give them food and water, play time, grooming, take them to any vet appointments requested by our team and you'll also bring them in to our centre to meet any potential adopters.

Some animals will have ongoing training plans and, if this is the case, it will be discussed with you prior to agreeing to temporarily house them and a guide will be provided with ongoing support.

How much time will I need?

This depends on your foster animal, and we'd always match responsibly. Kittens and puppies require constant supervision when very young so if you work full time, this would not be the option for you (unless work is home based and very flexible!). Older animals that are more independent can cope with some time alone.

You will need to have some flexibility during the week to attend any necessary vet visits and rehoming appointments (which could also take place on weekends). We will always get your availability before booking something in.

What kind of animals need a foster home?

A range of animals in different situations but some examples are young animals that need lots of socialisation, stressed animals that don't cope in a kennel or a cattery, elderly animals that need home comforts or those that have medical needs and are best suited to a home environment for their welfare. Generally, those animals that are established friendly, healthy, and happy are usually rehomed quickly and therefore may not require a foster home.

Can I choose which animal I foster? I've seen one on the website that I like the look of.

Not all animals need fostering so we do prioritise those who would benefit the most. Any foster animal would be discussed with you in full before you commit to fostering them and you can say no if it doesn't feel right. Visits to your potential foster animal can be arranged prior to accepting them.

What support will be offered?

You'll have a dedicated foster co-ordinator assigned to you. We'll tell you everything you need to know about your foster animal prior to you agreeing to welcome them into your home. We will provide advice and support through your foster placement as and when necessary.

We cover all veterinary costs at our on-site vet clinic or assigned out of hours clinic. We'll give you all the supplies that your foster animal will need but you'll need to collect them from our centre and give us a bit of notice to get them ready for you (3 days' notice is ideal). Unfortunately, we cannot cover fuel/transportation costs.

How long will I need to foster for?

For young kittens with their mum, you may have them on foster from around 2 weeks old until they are 8 weeks old and splitting from their mum. Adult cats generally don't have a time frame – they can stay on foster until they are rehomed which could take weeks or months.

It's important when you begin fostering to let us know what sort of time commitment you can offer and if you have any upcoming holidays or house moves. If you do go away on holiday for example, your animal can return to the cattery or kennels unless we can find an alternative foster home for them to go to.

What if my foster animal becomes unwell?

If your animal becomes unwell during their foster placement, they will be seen by our on-site veterinarian and treated. Should they become ill out of hours, we have an alternative clinic for them to be seen.

Can my foster cat go outside?

No, foster cats will need to remain indoor-only unless you have a secure catio. If foster cats ventured outdoors, they are unlikely to come back to a home that they are unfamiliar with and there are always risks such as them getting into road traffic accidents or fights with other cats. Once in their permanent home, they will then be given outdoor access (unless there is a medical reason why not to) 4-6 weeks after they arrive and only when confident to venture out. Foster carers must be cautious and keep windows and doors closed when fostering so there are no escapes! Cats that are kept indoor-only do require some enrichment for them to mimic hunting behaviours so toys are a must.

Do I need to drive my own car?

You'll need access to a car as rescue animals may not be suitable to travel on public transport. It's preferable that you drive but not essential if you have a dedicated driver that can pick you up at short notice for any emergency vet appointments.

How do you rehome animals in foster care?

Foster kittens are most likely to be rehomed via our kitten waiting list as we have a high demand for kittens – homes will be lined up once they are of age to be rehomed. Adult cats are rehomed via our website where they are advertised. Potential adopters will be invited to come and meet the foster animal at our rescue centre at an agreed time that suits the foster carer and potential adopter. A

Rehomer will be present for the appointment. The potential adopters will already be registered with us and approved as adopters having undergone the relevant checks. On the day of the meet, you will be asked to bring your foster animal to our centre. If you want to partake in the appointment, this can be discussed ahead of time with your foster co-ordinator to see if that would be possible – it is not guaranteed. Depending on how the meet goes, the animal may be adopted the same day or will return to foster (if possible) until the day of adoption.

What if I want to adopt my foster animal?

We do require fosterers that can continue fostering for us as it's an important part of our rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming process but we completely understand that you may wish to adopt your foster animal! It's only natural to feel an attachment. Please let us know as soon as possible if you wish to adopt. Our Rehoming team will review your application and confirm if this is possible or not. Sometimes although the home may be perfectly suitable, the area may not be for a particular animal unfortunately. If your foster animal is already reserved for an adopter, it will not be possible for you to adopt them.

Can I foster as a trial to see if I want to adopt?

Fostering is aimed to provide a temporary home for our animals in need, so we do discourage trialling an animal to see if you'd like to adopt them. If you are interested in adopting or feel this is where you'd like to focus your efforts, we have a fantastic rehoming service where you will meet a potential match usually 1-3 times before adoption so it's plenty of time to see if they are the right fit for you! We invest in training and support for our foster carers so we do need foster carers that will commit to the foster programme to ensure that we are focusing our time and resources appropriately.

Can I foster with children or other pets in the home?

Every one of our animals is individually assessed to determine what sort of home they are looking for – this includes suitability to live with children or other animals. Many of the animals that are in our care have arrived as strays which means we know little about them or their history so the risk to temporarily home them with children, for example, can be too great. It doesn't mean you cannot foster with children or other animals in the home as we assess each case individually, but it just means that you may have to wait a little longer for a foster animal as not all will be suitable for your situation. Many animals that are in need of a foster home may be stressed, unwell or suffer with behavioural difficulties so do need a quiet, adult home. Confident kittens for example would likely be fine to be fostered with children and other animals whereas an elderly cat with medical needs may not.

What happens if I go on holiday or need a break?

We understand that you will have upcoming holidays, something unforeseen or may just need a break – that's okay! We have support in place for that. Your foster animal's pod/kennel will still be available and won't be filled so you can rest assured that your foster animal can come back to us with a little notice if possible. If the animal does not cope well in a rescue centre, we will try to place them into another foster home for that duration although this is not always possible.

Will I get updates on my foster animal once adopted?

Potentially! If the adopter is happy for us to share them, we will endeavour to share them with you.