

Be real about the difficulties

Regardless of how many books you might have read, how prepared you feel or if you have parented children before, the reality of caring for a vulnerable child will be a huge change for you. It's OK to find it hard and not have all the answers. Sometimes there are no answers. Find people to talk to that you can trust and who understand, particularly other foster or adoptive parents who may have experienced similar challenges. Call the Home for Good team for a listening ear and prayer support. If you are feeling especially overwhelmed or unhappy, talk with your GP. Look after yourself so that you are best able to look after your child.



Helping you to be an even better parent or carer



For more information and tips on family life, visit cff.org.uk

You might like to:

- Visit homeforgood.org.uk for more information about adoption and fostering.
- Contact them on 0300 001 0995 if you'd like someone to talk to, and to signpost you to further support where possible.
- Read *No Matter What* by Sally Donovan for a biographical account of caring for vulnerable children.

Care for the Family seeks to promote strong family relationships and help those who face family difficulties.

 cff.org.uk

 029 2081 0800

 mail@cff.org.uk

Care for the Family – A Christian response to a world of need. A registered charity (England and Wales: 1066905; Scotland: SC038497).

TTLFTWMM

 home for good

This leaflet was written for Care for the Family by **Home for Good** – a charity that inspires and equips the Church to play its part in caring for vulnerable children.

Top Tips

For Foster and Adoptive Families

The Early Weeks and Months



Congratulations on becoming a foster carer or adoptive parent! The journey that has led you to this point may well have been long, challenging or complicated, or it might have been fairly straightforward. Either way, it is wonderful that you are now able to welcome a vulnerable child into your family to offer them love, nurture and stability, whether permanently or for as long as they need.

The day that a vulnerable child moves into your home will be significant for every member of the family. Whether this happens following a planned period of introductions or as a response to an emergency situation, the weeks and months that follow will be challenging in lots of ways, but hopefully there will also be many moments of joy and connection.



Keep home a safe and predictable space

Your child or children are going through a huge transition. Their whole world is changing, potentially for a second or third time (or sadly, perhaps even more than that), so it is paramount that you help them feel as settled and secure as possible. Keep visitors to your home at a minimum and let friends and family know that it would be best not to drop in just yet. As you feel your child is ready to meet others, choose the most appropriate place for this. It can be a good idea to meet at a neutral location like a park, so that home remains 'their' space.

Routine, routine, routine

A routine helps any child feel safe. As you follow regular patterns and reinforce clear boundaries, children can begin to trust you as you consistently meet their needs. If your child had a good routine in their previous home, try to keep it. Don't make any changes until you feel they are settling in with you, and when you do want to introduce a change, do these one at a time and very gradually. If your child did not have a routine, or the routine has not been explained to you, establish one that works for you and then stick to it.

Lean on your support network

Part of your assessment to become a foster carer or adoptive parent will have been to identify the family and friends who will offer you support. This was not just a written exercise! These are the people who love you and want to help your family thrive, so invite them to help you, suggest ways they can do this, and accept their offers of support. It could be through bringing you meals, doing a supermarket shop for you, giving your house a

tidy-up while you're out for the day, or being on the end of the phone to talk and pray when things are hard. Think about the points when things might be increasingly challenging, for example when one part of a couple returns to work or when you or your child gets ill, and prepare your support network to step up even more at these times.

Treasure transition objects

Whether it's a teddy bear, a photograph, a dummy or a favourite bedtime story, make sure your child has the familiar things that offer them comfort. Even if they are not wholly positive or things you particularly like, for example a gaudy blanket or an older child using a dummy, these objects are still hugely significant for your child and it will help if you can honour the comfort they offer.

Don't assume, don't compare

Your child is unique and so are you – there is no other family like yours. Plus, your child will have experienced some level of trauma and loss on their journey to joining your family and this will outwork in their emotions and behaviour. Give yourself space to learn how best to care for, support and nurture them, and for them to hopefully begin to trust you, without expecting things to look a certain way or be like it has been for others.

