

Don't fit the mould? Neither did I!



My name is Nichola, and I became Foster Carer for the **South Eastern Health & Social Care (SEHSC) Trust** in 2016 when I was in my late thirties. I had been looking for an opportunity to help other people when my friend suggested I consider fostering. Until that conversation I had not realised that I could foster as I work full time, I am not married and I do not have children of my own!

I contacted the SEHSC Trust and applied to become a carer. The application process involved an initial meeting with a social worker and attending a training course. The training course helped me understand why children may be in care which further strengthened my desire to become a carer.

During the application process I became aware that there are many types of caring options available which include long term care, emergency care, kinship care and short term care etc.

Given that I work full time and do not have children I was anxious about committing to becoming a long term carer. I therefore, went through a Fostering Assessment to become a respite carer. For me, providing respite meant committing to having children stay with me for two weekends per month.

I loved being a respite carer and very quickly realised I wanted to look after a child on a longer term basis. Eighteen months after my first respite, I was fortunate enough to have my wonderful respite child move in full time and become part of my family.

Although I work full time I aim to provide a loving, encouraging and supportive environment for my young person. Looking after any young person can have its challenges, but there are so many more positive experiences which outweigh them.

I didn't think that I fitted the mould as to what a carer should be, but I was wrong. If you are loving and understanding you too could provide a caring home for a young person. Please contact the South Eastern Trust to see if you too can break the mould!

My young person has asked me to say "if you do want to become a foster carer the Trust will be supportive and it will brighten up a child's world as well as your own. Thank you from Nichola's foster child".