



First placement

Becoming a foster carer is a life-changing journey — not just for you, but for the child stepping into your home. Your warmth, patience, and openness will lay the groundwork for their sense of safety and belonging. Here's how to prepare for — and gently welcome — your first placement.

1. Prepare Your Home

- **Create a welcoming space:** A clean, cosy bedroom with age-appropriate bedding, personal touches like books or toys, and space for their belongings shows thought and care.
- **Stock the essentials:** Have basic toiletries, snacks, school supplies, and clothing on hand. If you're unsure about sizes or preferences, ask your supervising social worker (SSW).
- **Keep it calm:** Avoid overwhelming them with noise, too many people, or packed schedules. A calm, quiet environment helps them feel safe.

2. The First Hello

- **Be warm, but not pushy:** Greet them with a smile, offer them a drink or snack, and give them space to adjust.
- **Let them lead:** Some children will want to talk, others may stay quiet. Both are okay. Respect their pace.
- **Avoid too many questions:** Let them settle in before discussing routines or expectations in depth.

3. Share What to Expect

- **Explain routines:** Gently walk them through how things work — meal times, school runs, bedtime — and reassure them that you're there to help.
- **Show them around:** A little tour helps them feel oriented. Let them know which spaces are theirs and where the bathroom, kitchen, and quiet areas are.
- **Be consistent:** Structure and predictability reduce anxiety, especially during transitions.

4. Small Comforts Go a Long Way

- **Welcome pack:** A teddy, book, or welcome letter can feel like a big hug when everything else is unfamiliar.
- **Food and routines:** Ask about likes, dislikes, allergies, and favourite comfort foods.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Be mindful of the child's background, traditions, and religious or dietary needs.

5. Be Emotionally Available

- **Expect mixed feelings:** Fear, grief, anger, or withdrawal are common. They're not personal — they're expressions of loss and uncertainty.
- **Listen more than you talk:** Being heard helps a child feel safe and valued.
- **Stay calm:** If challenges arise, respond with patience and compassion. You're their steady anchor.

6. Build Trust Slowly

- **Don't rush connection:** It takes time to build trust. Consistency, care, and kindness are your strongest tools.
- **Be honest and dependable:** If you say you'll do something, follow through.
- **Keep communication open:** Let them know you're here to listen and support, no matter what.

7. Work as a Team

- **Connect with professionals:** Keep regular contact with your SSW, the child's social worker, and any other professionals involved.
- **Attend training:** Ongoing learning will help you feel confident and supported.
- **Take care of yourself:** Your wellbeing matters too. Reach out if you're unsure or need guidance.

Remember:

This is a big moment for both of you. The child may not show it, but your care is already making a difference. You are helping them feel seen, safe, and supported — and that is something truly extraordinary.