



My name is Lydia, I'm 15 years old and currently in year 11. I enjoy school and have a close set of good friends. I'm a fan of Twilight and enjoy reading the books over and over again along with other books. I enjoy going to the cinema and shopping with my friends. I love painting and one of my favourite subjects at school is art. I'm a keen badminton player and regularly bake cakes and cook for my family.

I was almost 9 when my parents began fostering and when it was first mentioned I was excited that a new child was going to come into our family.

I knew that my parents were going to foster short term and the age group they intended to foster. I was

excited that they may get a baby to look after. I was however worried that I might miss out on some of our family activities or my parents may not have as much time to spend with me.

The social worker that came to interview my sister and me during the assessment scared me. She made my sister cry and it felt that she was trying to put us off fostering but by the end of assessments I liked her.

I don't feel left out although my parents spent a lot of time with the babies that came into our home. I have very close relationships with both sets of grandparents and I spent lots of time with them as usual so didn't really feel as though as if things had changed.

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Contact for the children often restricts us in our family planning as we often have to wait for the child to come back or go to contact, so we have to delay some activities or reschedule. We do seem to spend more quality time together and have more days out.

I think my parents tend to rely on me more than my friends parents do with them and I feel more grown up and more wary or apprehensive of the outside world. My parents warn me of the dangers but they give me the trust and responsibility to do the right thing as I have the freedom to make certain choices as they have explained the situation to me.

There always seems to be a lot of waiting around either for children to come back from contact or a child to come into the house and often not arrive. My parents seem to do a lot of planning for placements that don't eventually arrive, and vacuum sealed bags of clothes are constantly being lifted in and out of storage.

There are a lot of visitors to the house relating to the children that stay with us, so I tend to stay out of the way when they are here. I feel it has made me more independent and it has made me think of my future and what I may wish to do. I have been researching careers in social care and looking to take subjects at A level that will help if I decide on a care vocation.

Most of my friends didn't understand what fostering is. They think we have the opportunity to keep the children that come into our home and often ask how do we let them go when it comes time for them to move on. I have to constantly explain to friends and school friends that not all birth parents are bad parents and the reasons that children come to stay

with us are varied and each child's case is different. They believe that the children are not wanted by their parents which is not true and they believe as a family we can pick the children that stay with us. I think I know more about fostering now as I have to explain a lot to my friends.

If your parents want to become foster carers then be honest and talk to your parents. I could have asked more in the beginning and it would have stopped me from worrying about little things. Don't expect to get perfect little babies as placements. Generally all children that have stayed with us have had some extra or special need to be addressed while living with us.

Your parents will have to devote a lot of time to the care of children that live in your home and I think it may be more worrying for children without brothers or sisters. I was lucky in that I had my sister so in effect I was already sharing my parents with someone else (and there was someone who understood what I was experiencing too).

When children leave, how I feel depends, if the experience was good then I'm sad when they go but also happy for them. I tend to worry if they go back to family as I always ask myself why they came into care in the first place just to be returned to the same family.

With every child you build up an attachment and sometimes it feels very sudden when children leave. I believe we all foster as a family and have to take comfort in that as a family we have done the best to make the child's stay with us a happy one. I sometimes worry but have to trust that that someone new will care for the child as well as we have because

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effectively they have been my brother or sister for a while. It has also made me feel lucky to have my own sister and brother.

Fostering has made me think about social care as a career. I would eventually like to work with troubled children.

I feel closer to my family and the adoption of one placement now provides me with a brother. I know he will have to return to hospital for major heart surgery and I do worry that he may not return from

one of the operations but equally I consider what will happen as my parents become older and if my brother needs special care in the future.

I know that my sister and I will always be there for him and we are very close.

**Lydia**

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