



## Spotlight on parent and child fostering

There are many kinds of specialist foster care placements. Today's bulletin is focusing on one - parent and child foster placements, which are on the rise. asphaleia received seven referrals for this specialist placement in April alone.

### What is a parent and child foster placement?

Parent and child foster care placements offer a home to a baby or young child together with its parent. The aim of this scheme is to provide a safe, family based placement for parent and baby. It may be that a parent has not had a positive family life and positive input from a foster carer can provide the help a young parent needs with reassurance, guidance and support during a period of considerable change. The foster carer would be helping them to develop their own parenting skills whilst ensuring the child was in a safe, secure and nurturing environment.



Parent and child placements could include:

- A teenage mum and child
- A dad and child
- Both parents and the child
- Parents of any age with a baby where social services have identified a potential child protection issue

The foster carer:

- does not provide parental care (except if required) but is there to help and encourage the parent to develop their skills
- ensures the parent attends all the relevant health visits and appointments required to keep their baby healthy
- supervises the parent and child 24/7 where there is a child protection issue. This may include having the baby sleep in their room and waking the parent when the baby wakes in the night
- has an important role observing and recording how the parent looks after the child, to feedback to social services. They may have to give evidence in court.

Foster carers play a key role in the assessment of parents and their ability to care for their baby, with placements last on average about 12-24 weeks. Some need more practical help right from the word go - how to hold a baby or feed a baby. Some need more emotional support, some need both.

The baby benefits from being brought up in a family environment and the young mothers gain tremendously from the support and advice offered by the foster carer. It also enables some teenage mothers to complete their schooling or to have a job.



### **The asphaleia picture**

We currently have one carer who is able to provide a parent and child placement. We are in desperate need for carers who have the skills to work with this group of people, who otherwise might be placed in supervised accommodation.

### **Tracy's story**

Tracy left school at 15. After a several periods in children homes she was back living with her mother but they continually argued. There was a lot of alcohol being drunk in the family which hardly helped and Tracy soon became pregnant.

"I planned it, I wanted to have my own baby but when you're young, you don't realise what you're getting yourself into – like the responsibility, and it is a big responsibility. You just think about having this nice baby and showing it off."

Tracy was not coping and it was decided that she and her unborn baby were at risk so her local social services agreed it was best to place Tracy in a foster home. With no qualifications and an unstable home-life, Julie would have faced an uphill battle trying to provide a secure and loving home for her baby. The statistics show that babies born to teenage mothers often end up in care.

"At first they wanted to put me into a hotel-place, the local mother and baby hostel. I went there and it was really rough. I hated the look of it but I had been in a foster home before and I quite liked it, so when they asked me if I would like to be placed with a family I said yes."

Tracy was five months pregnant when she moved to foster care. She had her baby son, stayed for six months then moved into her own flat and with help, started a hairdresser course at her local college. With the help of a foster carer, mum and baby were given the best start possible.

*(Taken from [www.fostercarenews.co.uk](http://www.fostercarenews.co.uk))*

### **Quiz question 4**

What is the cumulative number of all the asphaleia statistics on yesterday's bulletin?

To find out more about becoming a foster carer with asphaleia please contact the fostering team on 01903 236522 or visit our website <http://www.asphaleia.co.uk/ventures/fostering.html>.

