

Bridgend highlights vital contribution of foster families

Every day foster families across Bridgend County Borough are providing fostered children and young people with a safe, loving and stable home. This commitment from foster families is more important than ever during the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak.

Bridgend County Borough Council is keen to highlight the dedication of these foster carers while urging more people to come forward to foster, especially during Foster Care Fortnight, which runs from 11-24 May.

Despite the unprecedented practical and emotional challenges that the coronavirus is bringing, foster carers continue to provide day-to-day support, love and stability to children and young people who cannot live with their birth families.

They support children and young people's education, health, and social wellbeing, and help to maintain the children's relationship with the people who are important to them but who they cannot currently see in person.

Foster carers like, Graham Clifford, along with his partner Rose, who have been foster carers with Bridgend Foster Care for over two decades. During this time, they have cared for 11 children and young people of all ages, from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of needs.

Recently, Graham was presented with The Fostering Network in Wales' inaugural President's Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to foster care.

He said: "Seeing the children in our care thrive, grow in confidence, achieving, smile and laugh again or even for the first time is a reward in itself. We are, and always have been a family who foster. All the family are involved. Our grandchildren love making friends with the children that come into our home, sometimes, making long term friendships."

Daniel and Rachel Hodgson have been fostering with Bridgend Foster Care since 2016. Daniel said: "Fostering is something we decided we could do together, as a team. We are delighted to provide children with a safe, warm, loving home environment. We would like to continue fostering for many years to come.

"With Bridgend Foster Care, you get to experience lots of activities and events. The team building days help bring lots of experiences and ideas together. We also get a chance to meet other foster carers and build strong support networks."

Foster carer Debra said: "The wonderful thing about fostering is that you can, genuinely make a difference. Seeing the young people blossom in your care is such a positive experience.

We are so thrilled we picked up the phone, and made the choice to become foster carers!"

Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help, Cllr Phil White, said: "Few jobs are able to provide people with such a feeling of achievement, knowing they have often become the pivotal person in changing a child's life for the better.

"Often people, with so much to offer to young people in care, don't realise that they would be perfect for the role.

"Foster Care Fortnight helps shine a spotlight on the vitally important job foster carers do across the county borough, and hopefully encourage more people to put their skills to good use to make a real difference in the life of a child who desperately needs their help.

"As things stand, we have a shortage of foster carers across the county borough, we need this to change, and we need more foster carers to achieve this. Despite the coronavirus, this year is no different, so anyone who thinks they might have the skills and experience to become a foster carer is urged to contact Bridgend Foster Care."

To find out more about fostering in Bridgend County Borough, call the team on 01656 642674, email: bridgendfostercare@bridgend.gov.uk or fill in an enquiry form at www.bridgendfostercare.wales

Foster Care Fortnight is organised by fostering charity 'The Fostering Network'.