WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
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QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 16th 2026
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 23rd 2026

Question

"Will the Minister advise what steps have been taken to increase the number of foster parents in the Island?"

Answer

In recent years, several steps have been taken to increase the number of foster carers on the Island. The steps recognise that recruitment alone will not increase the number of foster carers but that other factors that retain and make a foster carer a valued and properly supported role financially, professionally and practically are equally important.

A comprehensive review of foster carer fees and allowances paid to cover the needs of children in foster care and the needs of their foster carers was undertaken in 2024 and implemented in 2025 to ensure the financial package remained competitive and recognised the cost of caring in Jersey. The revised scheme has an allowance structure and additional carer fees linked to experience and skills, and financial support. There are 4 levels of payment made to foster carers and decisions about what is an appropriate level of pay are based around the skills and training of the foster carers, compared to the needs of the children they are caring for. This acknowledges for example when children have complex needs requiring higher levels of additional support.

Foster carer fees are also reviewed and updated each January, in line with the civil service pay award, to ensure that they take account of cost-of-living pressures. The last uplift took place in January 2026.

Children and their foster carers benefit from an extensive package, which includes financial support for bedroom furniture, moving in grants, baby/toddler equipment, school equipment and uniform and membership to family activities such as Durrell and Jersey Heritage. The financial package, outlined in the Foster Carer Handbook, was reviewed and revised in 2025.

Numerous recruitment campaigns have been undertaken. Recruitment efforts were specifically targeting carers for children aged 5–11 and teenagers, where placement shortages were most acute. Focusing on the most recent period since 2024 these have included:

- Several "Time for Teens" drop-in recruitment sessions held at the Santander Work Café during 2024, as well as advertising on social media and with local news outlets.
- "Fostering Moments" where the stories and experiences of current foster carers were shared on social media and local news outlets to promote fostering in Jersey for Foster Care Fortnight in May 2024.
- Various community marketing and recruitment sessions were held in 2025, including social media marketing focused on the power of relationships for Foster Carer Fortnight in May 2025 and as part of Pride and in local businesses such as Ransoms Garden Centre.
- Myth busters campaign in March 2025 focused on busting the myths associated with fostering, with the aim of raising awareness across the community about who can foster generated increased interest.
- 'In Gov' campaign "Could You Change a Child's Life in 2026?" which was aimed internally at Government of Jersey employees and ran for 2 weeks in February 2026.

Conversion of enquiries from campaigns has led to increased numbers of prospective foster carers attending initial training, *Skills to Foster*. This has been conducted twice since June 2026 and another is planned for January 2027 and from there prospective carers are expected to progress to assessment and approval.

Barriers to prospective foster carers recruitment, and understanding why carers may wish to exit fostering have been considered as part of the Children's Service Improvement Programme (CSIP). In particular, the level of support provided for the carers and children was considered. Subsequently, funding was secured by the CSIP to develop the *Hive* Fostering model based around the support and relationships found in an extended family. It brings together several fostering families creating a supportive community and providing positive experiences for both carers and children. An experienced "hub" carer will provide practical, emotional, and crisis support to a group of satellite foster families. This has been a highly effective, well researched model of delivery in the UK.

As well as providing individual support, the *Hive* model strengthens the fostering community by encouraging peer connections and regular social activities. The model reduces isolation, increases carer retention, and significantly decreases placement breakdowns. This approach delivers greater support for carers, by increased respite and access to specialist therapeutic support to enable carers to provide high-quality care to children.

Mobilising and recruiting foster carers to the Hive began in May 2026 with public information sessions held in the St Helier Central Market, with Hive 'floor' visual created by our children in care advertised around the market. A further Hive campaign is planned in early 2027.
Despite recruitment campaigns, the challenge to increasing the number of foster carers continues.

Recognising, respecting and valuing existing foster carers is important to retaining foster carers as an important part of the team around the child. In 2025 fostering support groups were established to meet frequently with carers and the Head of Service, with a bi-monthly session dedicated to induction for new carers. This offered an opportunity for foster carers to develop and maintain connections and also offers a space for feedback, questions and answers. A celebratory awards ceremony was held in December 2025 to recognise the work foster carers do and commitment to children in our care.

In 2025, following feedback from foster carers, reviewed as part of de-registrations and on-going carer feedback, much has been done to stabilise the workforce. A focus on permanent staff since autumn 2025 has had a positive impact to improve consistency and support provided to carers on reducing changes of supervising social workers for foster carers.

Other steps have included targeted support groups, for example a session provided October 2026 by CAMHS to offer practical strategies for carers to respond to children that have experienced trauma. The training offer for foster carers has been improved to include increased opportunities for progression, learning and development.