

One of our brilliant foster carers explains why she chose to foster and urges others to consider it.

In North Tyneside, there are 161 fostering households, providing a home to over 206 children and young people, but more are needed.

Carmen usually looks after older children and teenagers and is currently carer to two boys of 11 and 17 years old with additional needs. She said: "Like most families during lockdown, our day starts with a good breakfast before starting their schoolwork at home, which is challenging!

"Once their schoolwork is done, we typically do some chores then go shopping. This can be difficult as both young people have ADHD. They struggle with standing in line and distancing in the shop. After lunch we normally go for a walk to get some exercise.

"When the weather is good, we like to have tea in the garden with some music and lots of loud singing! After tea, we'll play football and the 11-year-old is allowed an hour's screen-time before bath and bed. The older one spends some time with us before going to bed.

"I'm often asked why I chose to foster and my answer is simple – I spent my teenage years in a residential home so I feel really strongly about foster care. I have an understanding of how some of our young people feel and that helps me to connect with them.

"I waited until my own children were old enough to manage the changes then applied. I absolutely love my role and even though it's challenging and life-changing, I would urge anyone who is interested to at least look into it."

Part of the reason Carmen chose to foster with North Tyneside Council is its positive Ofsted inspections of its children's service, the latest being 'outstanding'.

Speaking about the support she receives, Carmen said: "As a foster carer, I am afforded the opportunity to work as part of a multi-disciplinary team of social workers, teachers, health visitors, school nurses, outside agencies such as NSPCC, the children's families and at the core the children themselves – everyone working to ensure each child gets the life and future that all children deserve.

"I am lucky that my supporting social worker and the wider fostering service are extremely supportive, not only in my daily care of the young people but also in my continual professional and personal development."