

A carer has told of the highs and lows of fostering in North Tyneside as she urged others to take the plunge.

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

And as national Foster Care Fortnight gets underway this Monday (May 11), the council is shining a light on the work they do – especially now, during the coronavirus pandemic.

One of those is Irene Evans who has been a foster carer in North Tyneside Council for 10 years, looking after 20 children.

Having worked as an occupational therapist for years, and often thinking about fostering, Irene decided to take the plunge and apply to foster.

The 47-year-old still feels as passionately about it now as she did when she started, she said: “It’s one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. The day I was approved I was thrilled, and I’ve never looked back.

“An analogy for being a foster carer is like being at a fairground! There are highs and lows; laughs and giggles, tears and fears but each moment is unique and life changing for everyone involved. It is challenging, but it is also satisfying, rewarding and heart-warming.

“The children touch your heart with the smallest of smiles, accomplishments, words and any challenge.

“When people ask me what I like about fostering, my honest answer is everything!”

Irene is classed as a ‘short term’ foster carer, meaning she usually welcomes a child into her home until decisions are made about the child’s long-term plan.

Part of the reason Irene 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, Irene 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, head of fostering services and the wider fostering service are extremely supportive, not only in my daily care of the children but also in my continual professional and personal development.”