

45% of foster carers continue to foster because they see the difference they make to children who need support

99% said they believe fostering can change lives

Today, **Monday 26th February 2018**, is the start of Fostering Fortnight, the Irish Foster Care Association's annual campaign to raise awareness and understanding of foster care in Ireland. Running from 26th February – 9th March Fostering Fortnight will highlight all the valuable work taking place in foster care across the country. It is a chance for all those involved in fostering, and the communities that support them to tell their stories and share their experiences.

Highlights from the Irish Foster Care Association's Members Survey 2018*:

- 51% of respondents said they started fostering because they wanted to work with children who needed support
- 27% said they wanted their family to be involved in something that supported others
- 45% said they continue to foster because they see the difference they make to children who need support
- 34% said the hardest part of fostering was dealing with all the different people involved in fostering and 29% said it was trying to get additional services and supports for their foster child
- 52% advised anyone thinking of fostering to do their research and make sure it is right for you and your family and 31% said to talk to a foster family before going ahead
- 99% of respondents said they believe fostering can change lives

Foster care is the backbone of the alternative care system in Ireland. The number of children in care at the end of November 2017 was 6,182; of these, 92% are in foster care (65% in general foster care and 27% in relative foster care.) This means that children are supported in a family setting and can grow and develop in a secure environment while remaining connected to their birth family.

We need to celebrate the fact that these children are growing up as happy confident young people, who attend school every day and for some will be focusing on the upcoming state exams. Children in foster care thrive as foster families offer them secure, happy, and fulfilling childhoods, supporting them to reach their full potential.

Ardmhéara, Mícheál MacDonncha commented: “Fostering Fortnight is two weeks in the year when we shine a light on the vital role foster carers play in our alternative care system, but remember they provide this role 24hrs a day, 365 days of the year. It is a testament to our fostering service that 92% of children in care in Ireland are placed with foster families. Without the goodwill of so many families in Ireland, this would not be possible. I would like to take this time to say thank you to all foster carers for the commitment you have made to these young people.”

Speaking at the launch today in the Mansion House, Catherine Bond, CEO, Irish Foster Care Association said “Fostering Fortnight is such an important event for fostering in Ireland as it allows all involved in foster care to share their stories and show the positive work being done every day in foster care in Ireland. Foster care is the backbone of alternative care for children in Ireland with 5,703 children right now living with foster families. Foster families are 100% committed to these children. Every day they go above and beyond to care for these children and it is essential that their needs are met with access to services and supports for the children in their care and supports for them as foster carers.

Jim Gibson, Chief Operations Officer, Tusla, said, “We are delighted to support IFCA’s Fostering Fortnight. Foster carers are the backbone of our care system. We know that growing up in a family environment leads to better outcomes for children, giving them the best opportunity to reach their full potential as adults. I want to thank all foster carers for the work they do, sometimes in challenging circumstances. Tusla appreciates your enormous contribution and strives to continually improve our relationships with, and supports available to, foster carers.”

The Irish Foster Care Association is hosting a Family Bake Off in Cork on 3rd March. Everyone involved in foster care in the area is invited to come along and enjoy the day. Members will be hosting get-togethers and coffee mornings throughout the Fortnight and IFCA is also co-hosting the Dublin premiere of the award-winning film Resilience – the Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope on 27th February.

For more information on what is happening across Ireland for Fostering Fortnight, visit our Facebook and Twitter pages or visit www.ifca.ie for updates.

Ends

For further information:

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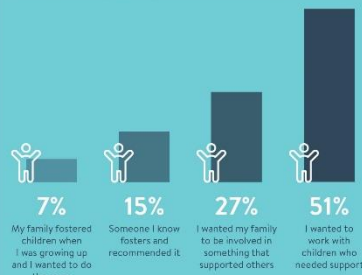
*The Irish Foster Care Association's Fostering Fortnight Members Survey was conducted in January 2018 and is based on 425 responses received.

WHY FOSTER? We asked our members to tell us about why they foster – and here is what they told us

Do you think fostering can **change lives**?



Why did you **start fostering**?



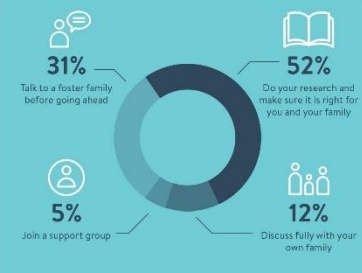
What motivates you to **continue to foster**?



What is the **hardest part** about fostering?



What **advice** would you give to someone thinking about fostering?



What one change would help you to **improve the lives of the children you care for**?

Continuity of Social Worker
Access to Service & Support
 More Information on Child Stability
 Less Red Tape
 Better Communication
 Guardianship, Adoption
 Listening to Foster Carer
 Nationwide Standards
 Relationships and Procedures
Putting the child first

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