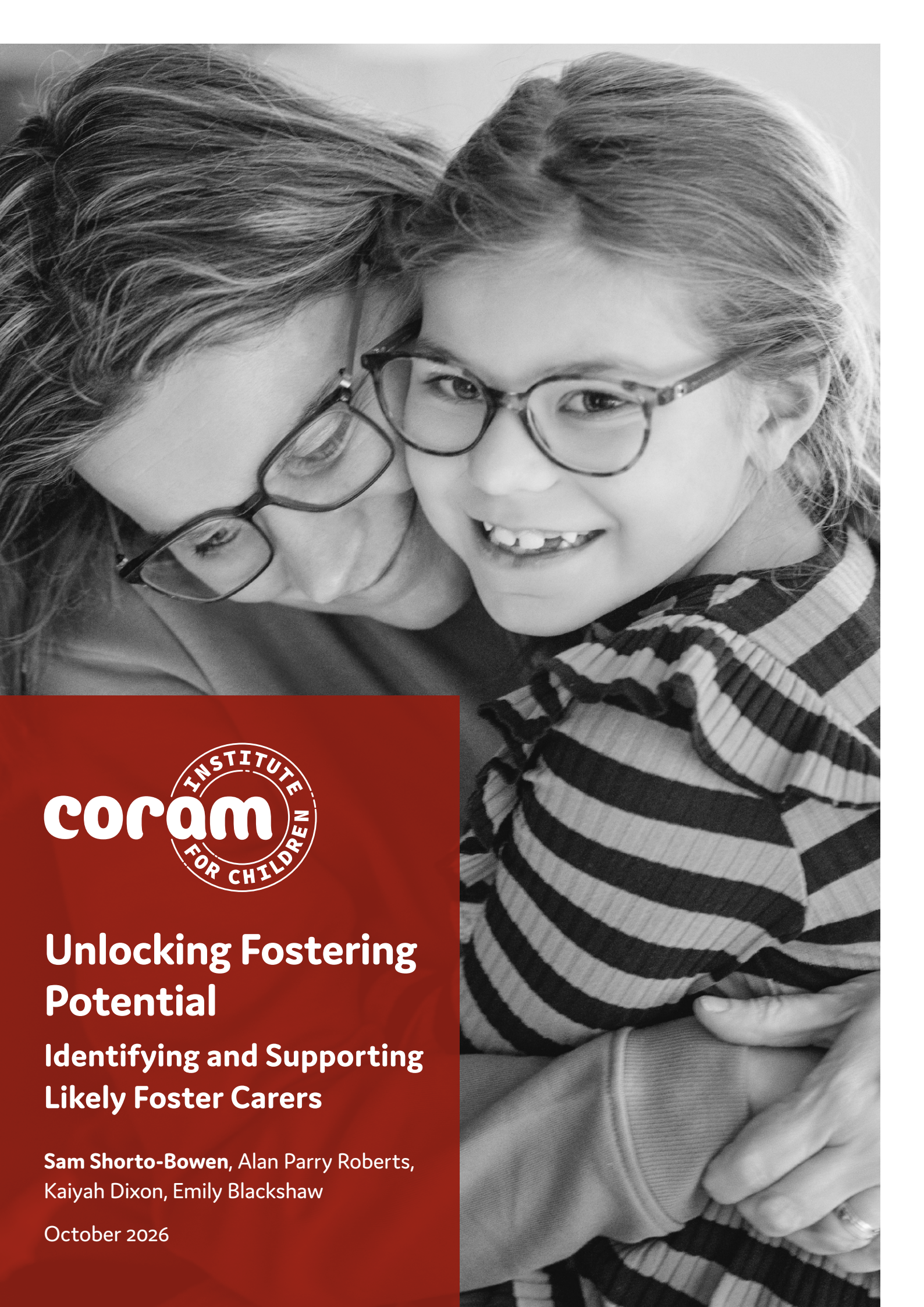




Unlocking Fostering Potential

Identifying and Supporting Likely Foster Carers

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Coram is the first and longest continuing children’s charity, established as The Foundling Hospital -the birthplace of children’s social care - in 1739 and is today a group of specialist organisations dedicated to the shared vision for a society where every child has the best possible chance in life, regardless of their background or circumstances.

This report is published by the **Coram Institute for Children**, the only recognised Independent research Organisation dedicated to children and turning insight into impact. It was funded by the Hadley Trust and produced by members of the Coram Research, Impact and Evaluation team which provides mixed methods research and evaluation. All our work aims to be child-centred, rigorous, grounded in experience, collaborative, and impactful.

CoramBAAF is the leading professional membership association across adoption, fostering and kinship care and supports agencies and social work colleagues to address the challenges they face and pursue best practice standards.

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What matters most for children

The Bright Spots surveys of the subjective wellbeing of children and young people in and leaving care demonstrate that:

94% of children in care (8-18) report that they have “an adult they can trust, who helps them and sticks by them no matter what.”

1 in 20 children and young people in residential care state they “never” feel safe where they live compared to less than 1 in 100 in foster or kinship care**.

*Seven Drivers of Wellbeing and **10,000 Voices reports can be found at coramvoice.org.uk

Foreword

Fostering remains the primary form of care for looked-after children in England, with around 56,400 children in foster care at any one time. This sits within a wider population of approximately 83,600 looked-after children, and nearly 400,000 children receiving support from the social care system. Despite this sustained demand, the supply of foster carers has been under increasing pressure

The total number of fostering households has declined year-on-year since 2021 (from 45,370 to 42,190 households), leaving services struggling to ensure children can access appropriate family-based care with more children with adoption placement orders remaining in care because of adopter shortage and more use of residential placements because of lack of available fostering households.

Within this overall decline there are important variations. Local authority fostering households have seen consistent declines, falling by 14% between 2021 and 2025. Conversely, independent fostering agencies (IFAs), which make-up 45% of mainstream fostering provision, have recently seen small increases in household numbers (an additional 13 households in 2025) going against the overall trend of decline. IFA households are also more likely to foster more children, compared with local authority households. As of 31 March 2025, 39% of IFA households were approved for 3 or more children, compared with 29% of local authority households.

Recruitment and retention challenges are central to these trends. Although 4,430 households joined fostering in 2024–25, more than that (4,690) left, meaning that exits continue to outpace entries. Meanwhile, the pipeline of new foster carers remains fragile: of the 5,370 applications submitted in 2024–2025, one in six were withdrawn, often due to changing personal circumstances or mismatches between expectations and the realities of fostering. This is, of course, likely the result of sound practice; it is preferable that applicants should withdraw if, over the course of their application, they find that they are not currently in a good position to become a foster carer.

In addition, the foster carer population is ageing. Over one third of carers are now aged 60 or over, compared with one in four carers in this age group five years ago. The generation that follows is smaller in number and is often involved in care for older relatives or grand-children. This raises longer-term sustainability concerns alongside immediate recruitment pressures.

The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care, led by Josh MacAlister OBE between 2021 and 2022, called for a ‘new deal’ for foster care, involving recruiting thousands more foster carers. Foster carer recruitment and retention was consequently at the heart of the government’s *Stable Homes, Built on Love* strategy (2023), which foregrounded regional recruitment hubs and rollout of the Mockingbird programme (which provides support for some current fostering households).

As Minister for Children and Families since 2025, Josh MacAlister has brought forward far-reaching plans to create up to 10,000 new foster care places in his *Renewing Fostering* strategy (2026). Against this backdrop of renewed national focus on foster carer recruitment and retention, this research provides an integrated evidence base to inform delivery of these ambitions. It seeks to answer the question: ‘Can we recruit 10,000 foster carers and if so, how?’

However, the problem is not just one of a lack of places, it is also about the co-ordination of those places to ensure sufficiency. There is a consistent issue with filling the available fostering places; 22% of available fostering placements were vacant in 2025, compared with 24% of vacant places in 2021. This indicates frictions in matching children to suitable homes rather than a simple shortfall in headline capacity. It is important to remember, however, that there are many reasons why an approved foster carer might not currently be looking after a child. For example, foster carers often need time to rest in between caring for children, while some approved carers are seen as good matches for sibling groups and are so being reserved for when a suitable sibling group is in need of a foster carer household.

This research updates the Department for Education’s survey of fostering and adoption propensity from over 10 years ago (Scott & Duncan, 2013) and comprises three key components:

1. a rapid literature review of evidence on the barriers and facilitators to foster carer recruitment;
2. quantitative analysis of fostering recruitment and retention data; and
3. population-based modelling of fostering propensity.

Together, these strands enable a more granular understanding of both the structural and behavioural drivers of fostering, supporting efforts to design policies capable of delivering the scale of recruitment envisaged in recent reforms, including the creation of up to 10,000 additional fostering places.

“It is not how much you do, but how much love you put in the doing that matters.”

– Mother Teresa

Key findings and recommendations

England's fostering system faces a significant challenge. Although fostering remains the primary form of care for looked-after children, the number of fostering households has continued to decline in recent years while demand for placements remains high with a fall in adoption numbers and growth in residential care provision. Against this backdrop, the government's ambition to create up to 10,000 new fostering places has renewed focus on ensuring sufficient numbers of foster carers are recruited, and where those carers are most needed. This research seeks to answer a simple but important question: can England recruit 10,000 new foster carers and, if so, how?

Findings from our newly-commissioned, nationally representative **YouGov** survey of 3,497 adults in England indicate that **there is substantial latent interest in fostering** across England. The survey results indicate that there could be a substantial pool of people in the general population who are interested in the idea of becoming a foster carer, both in the immediate and long-term future.

Although stated intentions do not translate directly into applications or approvals, and we should be cautious about assuming that all those who say they will apply to foster will actually do so, the findings do suggest that the potential pool of people interested in becoming a foster carer in the future may be considerably larger than current recruitment numbers would imply.

Survey respondents identified **helping vulnerable children and making a positive contribution to society are the strongest motivations for fostering**, while financial support, clear information, and practical support are among the factors most likely to encourage applications.

The survey also revealed several key demographics are particularly prone to saying that they are likely to apply to foster. Our **regression models showed that respondents who were female, younger, had larger households, were religious, identified as LGBTQIA+, gave to charitable causes involving children**, or already had young children were all statistically significantly associated with having a higher propensity to foster.

At the same time, results from the **rapid literature review** suggest that **significant barriers prevent interested individuals from progressing** from initial interest through to actually applying and then being approved.

England appears to have no shortage of people willing to consider fostering. The challenge for policy and practice is to unlock that willingness and translate it into a sustainable increase in approved foster carers where they are needed.



Achieving increased applications and approvals will mean addressing concerns about eligibility, confusion about the differing agencies and financial support available, anxiety or lack of clarity about the application process, the perceived complexity of children's needs. The research also highlights that there is **substantial geographic variation in both fostering demand and fostering propensity**. Rates of children looked after differ markedly between local authorities, while population-based modelling suggests that some areas, particularly parts of London and other urban authorities, have significantly higher fostering propensity than the national average.

In many of these areas, actual recruitment appears lower than would be expected based on the demographic characteristics of the local population, suggesting considerable untapped recruitment potential alongside the existence of location-specific barriers to becoming a foster carer.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the target of recruiting 10,000 additional foster carers over the current Parliament appears realistic and attainable if accompanied by a focus on retaining existing carers, but also that there are significant challenges to achieving sufficiency on a regional basis.

The findings of this research suggest that the primary challenge in foster carer recruitment is not generating interest in fostering, but converting existing willingness into approved foster carers. Success will also depend on more than national awareness-raising campaigns alone.

This means focussing on reducing practical barriers to being a foster carer, targeting areas and groups with untapped, high fostering propensity, and ensuring that prospective carers receive clear and consistent information about eligibility, support, training, and finances.

How do we realise the potential to foster?

While there appears to be substantial untapped potential within the English population, this potential is unevenly distributed geographically and across demographic groups. The recommendations below focus on targeting recruitment activity more effectively, and ensuring that gains in recruitment improve conversion and are supported by strong retention efforts increasing the certainty, consistency and practicality of being a carer.

- 1. Target recruitment efforts towards areas with high fostering propensity** but relatively low recruitment. Population-based modelling identifies a number of local authorities, particularly in London, where demographic characteristics suggest substantial untapped potential. Recruitment campaigns should prioritise these areas to maximise conversion of potential carers into approved carers, while also taking into account local context and challenges.
- 2. Focus recruitment messaging on converting interest into action.** Recruitment campaigns should combine values-based messages about helping looked after children and making a difference to society but also give clear and consistent information about eligibility, financial support, the application process, and the support available to foster

carers. This would help address the uncertainty and misconceptions identified as key barriers to fostering.

- 3. Develop tailored recruitment approaches for groups with higher-than-average fostering propensity.** Younger adults, people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, people of faith, parents of dependent children, and larger households all demonstrate elevated fostering propensity. Recruitment strategies should be tailored to better engage these groups and ensure that existing interest is translated into applications ensuring support matches the needs of their situation and concerns.
- 4. Publish a national strategy and invest in support and retention** alongside recruitment. Increasing fostering capacity will require both the recruitment of new carers and the retention of existing ones. Investment in practical, emotional and peer support for foster carers should form a key component of any strategy to increase the overall number of fostering households. Word of mouth and knowing other people who are foster carers are a key ingredient in progressing to application.
- 5. Introduce national reporting on the demographic profile** of newly-approved foster carers. This would address a significant gap in current fostering data and enable services to better understand whether recruitment efforts are attracting a diverse range of carers capable of meeting the needs of increasingly diverse populations of looked after children.
- 6. Commission and undertake further research into key demographics.** Some results from the survey show high propensity for becoming a foster carer for certain groups that may be counter-intuitive or show unrealised potential. For example, our results show that people at both extremes of the economic spectrum have higher fostering propensity than those in the middle, and that younger age groups are more likely to say they want to foster, even in the immediate future, than would be expected from people at their life stage. Further research should explore these disparities in more depth, in order to understand what is needed to translate potential foster carers into approved applicants
- 7. Annual review of national targets for recruitment** by government alongside formal evaluation of return on investment in the regionalisation of fostering to ensure that lessons are learnt quickly and changes to approach can be made.
- Any and all approaches should encompass all agency types to reflect and promote the reality of carer choice and **ensure that the maximum number of routes to fostering are available** to meet the needs of children.

Further support and analysis

You can explore these research findings further and join the Fostering Recruitment Forum to gain from regional insight analysis and marketing support by registering at coram.org.uk/fosteringnewfutures.

Methods

This research comprised three components: 1) rapid literature review of evidence on the barriers and facilitators to foster carer recruitment; 2) quantitative analysis of fostering recruitment data; and 3) population-based modelling of fostering propensity.

Rapid literature review

We conducted a rapid literature review on the barriers and enablers of foster carer recruitment. We used Google Scholar to search for relevant published literature. The search returned 49 results and 9 were retained after screening for relevance. One further article was included after searching grey literature, including the Department for Education, Ofsted, and Fostering Network websites.

We included studies in comparable high-income countries, studies published in the English language, and studies published between 2011 and 2026. Given this was a rapid review, screening was conducted by a single reviewer, with two colleagues checking instances where inclusion was unclear. A standardised data extraction form was used to support with the review.

The following information was extracted: study characteristics (author, year, country), study design and methodology, and key findings relevant to the review question. A narrative synthesis approach was used to summarise key findings, which were organised thematically around common enabling and undermining



factors influencing foster carer recruitment. Quantitative results were summarised descriptively, while qualitative findings were synthesised using thematic analysis principles.

Quantitative analysis of children looked after and fostering recruitment data

We conducted a quantitative analysis combining administrative data on children looked after and foster carer recruitment with measures of fostering propensity. Upper tier local authority–level data on rates of children looked after and newly approved foster carers were compiled and standardised to enable comparison across areas. These were then linked to fostering propensity indices derived from the results of our national-representative survey of 3,497 people across England and based on the method used in Scott and Duncan’s (2013) report on fostering propensity. We then mapped these propensity indices onto 2021 Census population characteristics to estimate the relative likelihood of fostering within each local authority. This approach allowed us to examine the relationship between underlying population-level propensity, observed recruitment activity, and demand for foster care, and to identify areas where these factors are aligned or where mismatches may indicate underperformance, structural constraints, or unmet need.

Updated survey of fostering propensity

Coram commissioned YouGov to carry out a new survey of fostering propensity. The survey contained five questions, covering likelihood of applying to foster at any point in the future and within the next three years, as well as internal and external motivators for fostering. Fieldwork took place between 2nd and 14th July 2026, with the survey carried out entirely online. The figures have been weighted to be representative of all adults in England (aged 18+). The total sample size was 3,497. The full survey can be found in Appendix 1.

Data from this survey was used both to estimate the number of potential new foster carers in England, as well as to inform the creation of indices to measure fostering propensity across demographic groups and local authorities. In order to estimate the potential number of new foster carers in the UK, various situations were modelled based on the proportion of respondents answering that they were ‘definitely going to’, ‘very likely to’, and ‘fairly likely to’ apply to become a foster carer both at any point in the future and within the next three years. These proportions were then used to extrapolate to the population of adults in England as a whole, and compared to Scott and Duncan’s (2013) survey results and extrapolations.

Confidence intervals for these extrapolations are given in the discussion. They were calculated using Wilson’s confidence interval, rather than the more widely-used Wald’s. This is due to Wald’s poor performance when *p* is close to 0 or 1, as many of the proportions in this study are, and Wilson’s much more reliable handling of this type of data (Agresti & Coull, 1998, p.121).

Population-based modelling of fostering propensity

Using data gathered from the newly commissioned survey (see previous subsection), we created new fostering propensity indices for demographic groups and upper tier local authorities. In a number of cases, the data categories in the census did not map directly onto those collected in our survey. Where this occurred, we merged census categories to create a best approximation of the categories used in the original study.

We were able to match ten demographic indicators from the 2021 Census to the demographic information collected as part of our survey, which were:

- Sex
- Age
- Marital status
- Religion
- Housing tenure (e.g. homeowner, renter etc.)
- Sexuality
- Employment status (e.g. working full-time, working part-time, student etc.)
- Ethnicity
- Number of people in household
- Social grade (AB, C1, C2, DE)

Once the demographic data for each local authority was collated, the population figures were converted to proportions. These were used in conjunction with the propensity scores to create a single propensity score for each local authority that combined every demographic indicator into one figure. Each demographic indicator was given equal weight in this index. These were then converted into a score indexed against the national average (1). To take an example, a score of 1.20 for a local authority would indicate that its demographic profile is associated with a fostering propensity that is 1.2 times higher than the national average.

These scores were then entered into a free online software called Flourish, which was used to create all of the maps seen in this paper.

Limitations

Firstly, as this study employed a rapid literature review methodology, the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive. Rapid reviews use streamlined processes (e.g., limited database searching, single-reviewer screening, and restricted inclusion criteria) to produce timely evidence, which may increase the risk of missing relevant studies or introducing bias. Consequently, while the review provides a useful synthesis of current evidence on barriers and facilitators to foster carer recruitment, it does not aim to be exhaustive, and its conclusions should be treated as provisional.

A second limitation relates to the use of self-reported fostering propensity in constructing indices of propensity. While survey responses provide a useful indication of openness to fostering, stated intentions do not necessarily translate into behaviour, as demonstrated by the large gap between the number of people who express willingness to foster and the number who ultimately apply and are approved. Survey results about fostering propensity should therefore be interpreted as an indicator of potential recruitment rather than a prediction of future applications.

On a related note, a third limitation is the substantial overlap between respondents expressing willingness to foster and those expressing willingness to adopt. This suggests that survey measures of fostering propensity may partly capture a broader openness to caring for vulnerable children, rather than a specific intention to foster. This is not an issue unique to our study, as a similar overlap was observed in the work of Scott and Duncan (2013). Estimates should therefore be interpreted as indicators of potential interest in fostering rather than forecasts of future fostering applications.

The population-based propensity modelling also relies on several assumptions. In particular, demographic propensity scores were applied independently and given equal weight when constructing local authority indices. This approach does not account for interactions between characteristics (for example, social grade is likely to be strongly linked to income) or for local contextual factors, such as housing costs, service provision, recruitment activity, or public awareness of fostering, which may also influence recruitment outcomes. As a result, the indices should be interpreted as indicative estimates of relative potential rather than precise measures of fostering propensity. Further studies should use methods such as multiple logistic regression that allow for interactions between variables to be taken into account.

Finally, comparison with the earlier work of Scott and Duncan (2013) is affected by differences in survey questions and methodology, as well as the simple fact that the previous work is now 13 years old. Whereas the earlier study focused on willingness to consider fostering, the present survey asked about likelihood of applying to foster. These differences limit direct comparability between estimates and mean that changes over time should be interpreted with caution.

Findings

Rapid evidence review of barriers and facilitators to foster carer recruitment

This section presents the findings of a rapid literature review on the barriers and enablers of foster carer recruitment, using Google Scholar to search for relevant published literature. The search returned 49 results, with 9 retained after screening for relevance and one further article included after searching grey literature (see Methods section for a more detailed account).

Evaluating fostering propensity and recruitment methods

Numerous studies have shown that across the UK, as well as in other high-income countries, the need for foster carers is not being met, and that this unmet need is increasing. Despite this, studies into fostering propensity tend to find that there is a large population of people willing to consider becoming a foster carer, even if this does not necessarily translate into applications.

Research into fostering propensity in the UK is relatively scarce. Perhaps the best example of such a study was carried out by Scott and Duncan (2013) on behalf of the Department for Education. The study involved 18 one-on-one interviews with individuals and couples about the barriers to adoption and fostering, as well as a nationally-representative online survey of 4,948 individuals based in England. Extrapolating from the survey results, the authors suggest that there could be up to 4.6 million people in England who would say that they are ‘fairly likely’, ‘very likely’, or ‘certain to’ consider fostering at some point in the future, with 590,000 being ‘very likely’ or ‘certain to’ do so (Scott & Duncan, 2013, p.4).

The study also found a strong demographic component to fostering propensity. People with personal experience of fostering, full-time carers, people working in the healthcare and non-for-profit sectors, and people active in their local community were all more likely to consider fostering than the general population.

Other demographic characteristics associated with higher fostering propensity included: people in full-time employment; people aged 18-35; people in long-term relationships; people who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual; and Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, especially those actively practicing their religion.

In a more recent study from Australia, Kunstler & Wright (2024) surveyed 1,033 adults in Victoria, Australia about barriers, attitudes, and motivators to considering, enquiring, and

applying to become a foster carer. The survey showed that while a considerable proportion of respondents (44%) would consider becoming a foster carer, the majority of whom had also enquired about becoming a carer, less than half of those who had made enquiries then went on to actually apply.

Demographically, the survey results found that the respondents most likely to consider becoming a foster carer identify as women, live outside of the metropolitan Melbourne area, are younger than 56, have a spare bedroom, identify as non-heterosexual, are parents with dependents, work in a care or social profession (e.g. teaching or nursing), have a tertiary education, rent or own their own home with a mortgage (rather than own outright)¹, or have a spare bedroom (Kunstler & Wright, 2024, p.47). The study suggests targeting recruitment efforts for foster carers in Australia at people with these characteristics whenever possible.

Barriers and facilitators to foster carer recruitment

Given the relatively high number of people who say that they are willing to consider becoming a foster carer, and the actual paucity of foster carers, it is clear that there are significant barriers that prevent the conversion of initial willingness to consider becoming a foster carer into actually applying and then becoming one.

Scott and Duncan (2013) identified that despite the relatively large population of potential foster carers, there were significant barriers to recruitment that needed to be overcome. The authors argue that ‘many myths need busting’ when it comes to foster carers, with false assumptions around what factors might disqualify someone from fostering, what support is available to foster carers, and how the application process works in practice.

In their survey, they found that top concerns about becoming a foster carer (in order) were:

- fear of not being accepted by a child you foster;
- whether I have time to be a foster carer; worries about the experience of fostering itself;
- how it might affect relationships with children you already have;
- how it might affect your relationship with your partner.

The survey also found that people made many assumptions and generalisations about the types of people that would be looked upon favourably in an application to become a foster carer, many of which were incorrect. The qualitative interviews also found that the people were very quick to assume that they

would not be eligible to foster, citing a plethora of reasons including their age, the space they have available at home, being single, being a smoker, or being overweight.

While some of these factors, such as space at home, can be a barrier to fostering, many others (such as being single) are not. The authors highlight that simple, clear messaging is needed to inform the public about the kind of applicants that fostering services are looking for, and emphasise the inclusive nature of fostering and that agencies are not looking for the ‘perfect’ candidate (Scott and Duncan, 2013, p. 9). Messaging should also help demystify how the application process works, what non-financial support is available, and the kind of children who are in need of adoption or fostering with common elements across those groups.

Research by Kantar Public UK (2022) drew on 30 in-depth, at-home interviews and 8 focus group discussions to make several insights on public perceptions of fostering (and adoption), and perceived motivators and barriers to fostering. One of the key findings of that study was that there is an overlap between fostering and adoption in respondents’ minds, with the two being seen as ‘points on a continuum or two sides of the same coin’. While both fostering and adoption were associated with family and the emotional reward of supporting a child in need, respondents saw fostering as a temporary commitment, or a ‘trial run’ for adoption (Kantar Public UK, 2022, p.7).

The study showed that motivations for fostering and adoption also overlapped. Respondents spoke about both inward-facing

motivations, such as achieving a family vision or finding personal fulfilment, as well as outward-facing motivations, such as a sense of duty towards the community or helping children in need. Interestingly, the study found that payments for fostering were not a significant motivating factor, although financial worries could be a barrier.

The main barriers identified in this study were concern about one’s ability to manage children’s complex needs, especially in light of negative media coverage that may have fuelled people’s doubts. However, this was far less prevalent among those who had previous knowledge of the reality of fostering or adoption, either through personal experience or through people close to them.

Lessons for practice

Another barrier was that preconceptions about the care system and the assessment system could undermine people’s beliefs in their suitability to foster, and even prevent them from applying. Respondents also struggled to navigate the system, find answers to questions, and make choices between identical agencies.

Interestingly, respondents also highlighted that they did not want to have social work involvement in their family or even ask questions over the phone, as they perceived making an enquiry to be the first stage of the application process, and did not want to jeopardise their application by ‘asking the wrong questions’ at the enquiry stage (Kantar Public UK, 2022, p.8).



CoramBAAF Fostering Consultant Emma Fincham (left) with foster carers after meeting with the Minister for Children and Families as part of the development of the fostering reform programme

1 The authors suggest that home ownership status may be secondary to other factors in determining fostering propensity. For example, it is likely that those who rent or own their home with a mortgage are also more likely to be younger and in work, and thus have a steady income and the motivation or energy to care for young people.

Retention of existing foster carers

Another important area in the literature concerns programmes designed to support current foster carers, as well as the impact that good support can have on both retention and recruitment. Given the difficulties associated with recruiting sufficient numbers of foster carers, retaining existing carers is an important element of maintaining the overall foster care system.

Research from Australia found that foster carers who were given the opportunity to engage in self-care practices saw an overall improvement in their own well-being, as well as their ability to provide the best care to their foster child/children. Gowan et al. (2023) used 148 surveys and semi-structured interviews with foster carers to investigate the impact of self-care on foster carers’ well-being. The study showed that while foster carers who engaged in self-care practices and programs saw positive outcomes, this was not something that they always had the opportunity to do. Barriers included the multiple responsibilities associated with fostering, as well as competing demands relating to children, employment and finances. Facilitators included social and family support, and opportunities to interact with other foster carers.

In another study, Midgley et al. (2021) used a randomised control trial approach to evaluate the efficacy and cost effectiveness of the *Reflective Fostering* program in the UK. The program aimed to deliver interventions to foster carers to increase their overall wellbeing, with outcome measures for stress levels, relative capacity, burnout, compassion fatigue, and the child-carer relationship. The programme worked in conjunction with participating local authorities, with foster carers allocated either

to the intervention group, where participants were provided with extra support from the Reflective Fostering programme alongside existing support from their local authority, or the control group, where participants received only their usual support from the local authority.

The intervention groups were co-facilitated by local authority team managers, a social worker and a foster carer, trained to provide intervention, with the intention of giving foster carers time out to focus on preserving their wellbeing and keeping them in the right headspace to carry out their role as a foster carer. It also focused on building a strong relationship between the carer and the child through psychoeducation and practical activities made to highlight the carers’ own experiences and feelings, including their reaction or behaviour towards their foster child. Through forms and questionnaires, findings suggest that the programme had a positive impact and saw improvement across the outcomes for both the carer and foster child.

Taken together, these studies suggest that effective support is important not only for carers’ wellbeing, but also for their ability to remain in the fostering workforce. Social and emotional support, opportunities to connect with other carers, and practical assistance in managing the demands of fostering can all help carers to feel more confident and supported in their role. This is particularly important given the multiple responsibilities associated with fostering and the potential pressures that carers may experience in balancing fostering with family life, employment and financial commitments. However, whatever efforts have been made in recent years, there is little evidence to suggest that they have led to these areas having improved sufficiency.



Quantitative analysis of children looked after and fostering recruitment data

Demand – children who are looked after

To contextualise estimates of fostering propensity and observed recruitment, here we consider variation in demand for foster care across local authorities. While propensity captures the potential supply of foster carers, and recruitment reflects realised supply, local systems are equally shaped by the level of need – in this case we use rates of children looked after².

While rates of children looked after provide a useful proxy, not all children require foster placements (such as those in kinship or residential care). As such, these figures should be interpreted as indicative of relative demand rather than precise measures of the number of children needing a foster family. Incorporating this third dimension allows us to assess not only whether recruitment aligns with underlying population characteristics, but also whether it is sufficient relative to local demand.

As of 31 March 2025, there are 81,770 children who are looked after in England, a rate of 67 per 10,000 children under 18 years. This is a 2% reduction from the previous year, when the rate was 69 per 10,000 children. Two thirds (67%) of looked-after children are in foster families and almost a quarter (24%) of foster placements are with a kinship carer as an approved foster carer. Just over half of children were placed inside the council boundary, with 69% placed within 20 miles of their home. Three-quarters (75%) of children in foster placements were placed within 20 miles of their home.

As shown in both Figure 1 and Table 1, rates of looked-after children vary widely across local authorities, pointing to substantial differences in underlying demand for foster placements. Rates of looked-after children ranged from a low of 27 per 10,000 in Richmond-Upon-Thames (121 children in total) to 184 per 10,000 in Blackpool (531 children in total) – a nearly seven-fold difference. This degree of variation highlights that local fostering systems operate under very different levels of structural pressure. While the current report does not seek to explain these differences, such variation is likely to reflect a combination of population variation, socio-economic conditions, local service provision, and differences in thresholds for entering care.

This variation is critical for interpreting patterns in fostering capacity. Local authorities with similar levels of fostering propensity or recruitment activity may nonetheless experience very different levels of sufficiency depending on the scale of need they face. As a result, examining recruitment in isolation risks obscuring whether local areas are meeting, exceeding, or falling short of demand.

If local rates of looked-after children are not matched by a corresponding propensity to foster within the same area, local authorities are likely to experience an insufficiency of fostering placements and may become increasingly reliant on external or distant provision. Although the pattern is not absolute, the distribution of the highest and lowest rates broadly reflects a north-south divide. This raises questions about the effectiveness of pooled or shared fostering arrangements on a regional basis as a solution to sufficiency challenges, as neighbouring authorities are often subject to similar demand pressures and have similar demographics and propensity levels, and may therefore have limited spare capacity to offer one another.

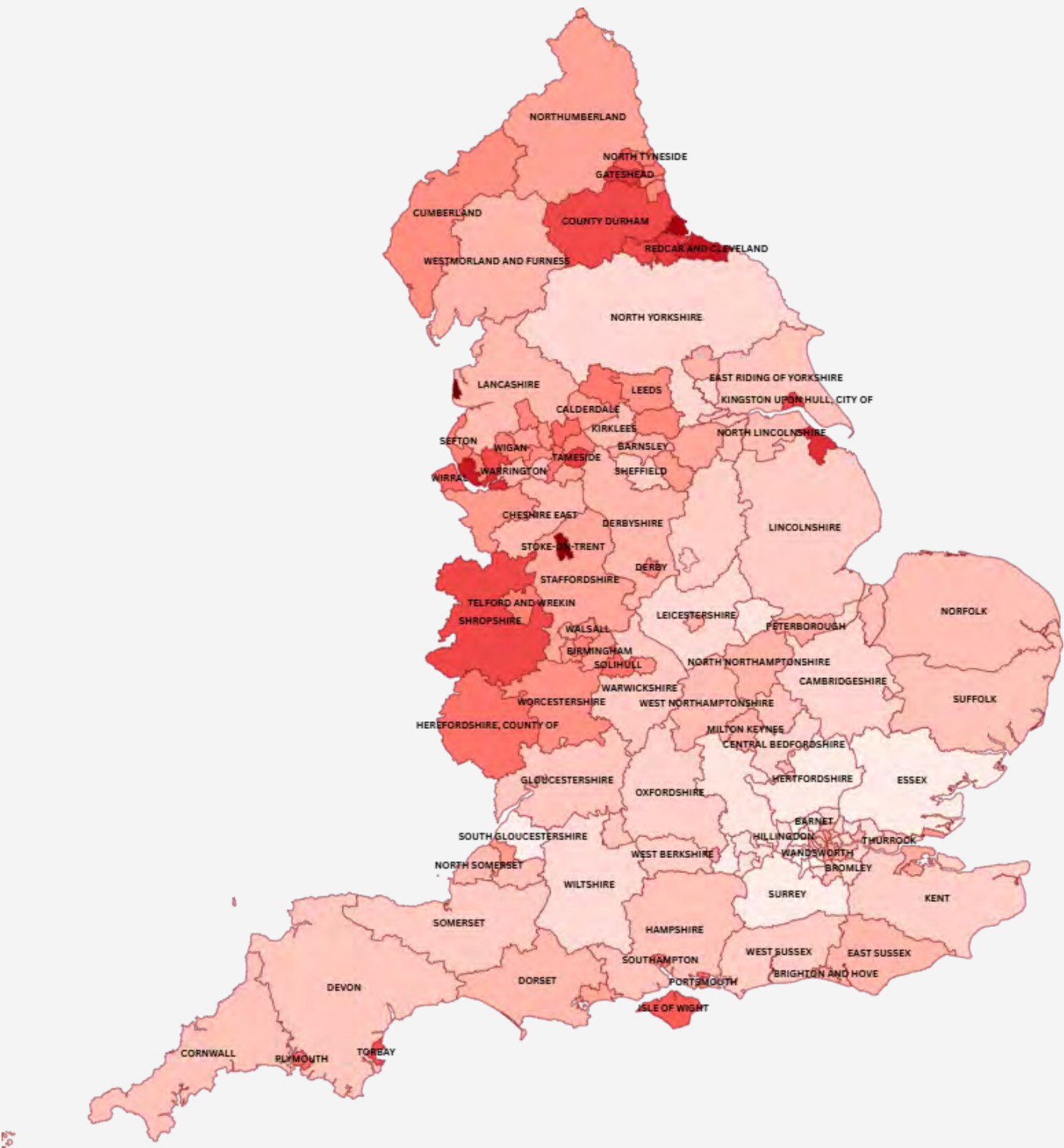
Table 1. Ten highest and lowest ranking local authorities by rate of looked-after children per 10,000 children

Highest rate of looked after children	Rate of looked-after children per 10,000 children	Lowest rate of looked after children	Rate of looked-after children per 10,000 children
Blackpool	184	Richmond upon Thames	27
Stoke-on-Trent	170	Harrow	29
Hartlepool	157	Kingston upon Thames	30
Liverpool	145	Merton	31
Redcar and Cleveland	144	South Gloucestershire	33
Middlesbrough	138	Ealing	33
Halton	132	Wokingham	34
North East Lincolnshire	131	Surrey	35
Stockton-on-Tees	125	Essex	35
Gateshead	124	Hertfordshire	36

2 Statistics in this section are taken from the Children looked after in England including adoptions annual statistics by the Department for Education (2025).

Figure 1: Local authority mapping of ‘demand’ as proxied by rate of looked-after children per 10,000 children³

27 184 per 10,000 children



Supply – recruitment of foster carers

To complement our analysis of fostering propensity, we next examine the supply of foster carers across local authorities. This involves two strands. First, we assess the extent to which the characteristics of existing foster carers align with those population groups identified as having higher or lower propensity to foster. Second, we compare recent rates of foster carer recruitment with our propensity indices. This allows us to explore whether areas with greater latent capacity to foster are in fact generating higher levels of realised supply, and to identify where gaps between potential and recruitment may exist.

As of 31 March 2025, there are 42,190 fostering households in England, 44% of whom foster through the local authority, 36% through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), and 21% through formal kinship care. There are 56,345 approved foster carers.

Age

As shown in Figure 2, the foster carer population is skewed towards older age groups: the majority of foster carers are 45 and over (81%), compared with just 19% who are 44 and under. This contrasts with both our own fostering propensity survey and that of Scott and Duncan (2013), where the highest likelihood of fostering is observed among younger adults—particularly those aged 18 to 34.

One possible explanation for this divergence is that measures of propensity capture *lifetime intentions* or *openness to fostering*, whereas the current foster carer population reflects the point at which individuals are most likely to act on this intention, which may occur later in life due to factors such as housing stability, financial security, or family circumstances.

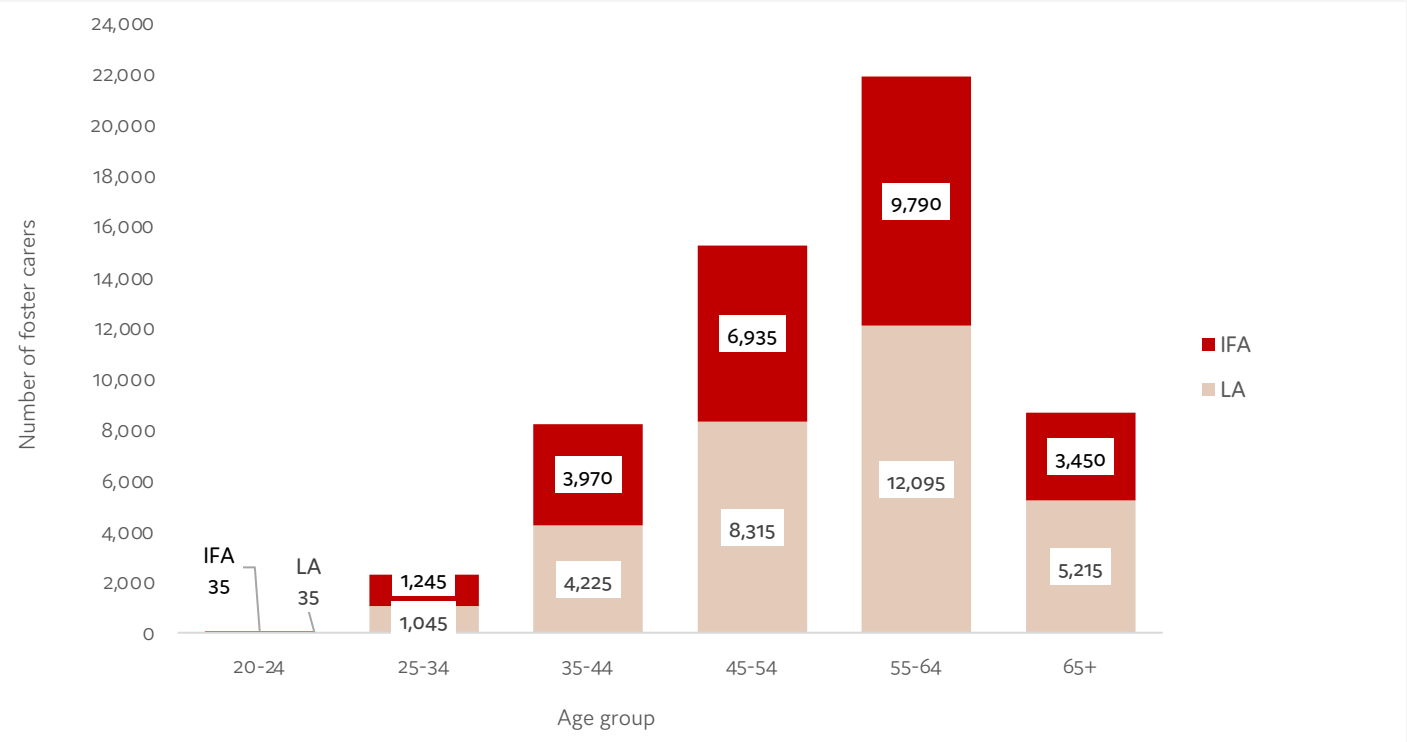
This explanation is weakened somewhat by the fact that 18-24 years are also the group most likely to say that they will apply to foster within the next three years, although there is potentially a degree of naivety associated with these responses. As discussed later in this report, it is very possible that people in this age group may well begin the inquiry process, but never make it to application stage due to a host of reasons, including housing situations (such as shared accommodation) that are unsuitable for fostering. However, further exploration of this discrepancy is needed.

Furthermore, direct comparison is limited by the lack of nationally available data on the characteristics of *newly approved* foster carers. Such data would provide a more appropriate basis for assessing how far recent recruitment aligns with groups identified as having higher fostering propensity.

This observed lag between intention and action may have important implications for how and when recruitment efforts are targeted. Recruitment strategies may need to engage individuals earlier in adulthood, even if conversion into fostering occurs later. It may be beneficial to view fostering as a life-course decision: recruitment efforts may need to engage individuals earlier, building awareness and intention, while recognising that conversion may occur later when financial, housing, and family circumstances are more conducive. It also suggests that some gaps between local fostering propensity and observed recruitment may reflect structural barriers or timing effects rather than simple underperformance.

Taken together, these findings support a more segmented approach to recruitment, targeting different age groups with strategies tailored to their stage of life, and highlighting the importance of sustaining a pipeline of future foster carers.

Figure 2. Foster carers (as of 31 March 2025) by age group and local authority/IFA status



Religion

Just over half of foster carers in England (54%) are Christian⁴. 30% of foster carers describe themselves as having no religion and 10% are Muslim (see Figure 3, below). Christians are overrepresented in the fostering population, compared with the general population where 46% describe themselves as Christian. This is also true of Muslim foster carers (7% in general population).

These rates are strikingly different to fostering propensity indices. In Scott and Duncan’s (2013) research⁵, Muslim survey respondents reported a fostering propensity index of 4.12, the highest across all religions, compared with 1.15 for Christian respondents. Individuals who are Hindu also reported very high fostering propensity at 3.45, despite only making up 0.4% of the fostering population in England (included in ‘All other religions’ in Figure 3). Our own survey did not include as detailed a breakdown as Scott and Duncan’s (2013) survey, with only three categories: ‘Christian’ (propensity index score of 0.99), ‘Any other faith’ (2.27), and ‘No religion’ (0.50). While it would have been preferable to have more faiths represented in our survey, this was the default demographic breakdown given by our survey provider, and adding more questions was beyond the budget of our survey.

At first glance, Muslim foster carers appear to be overrepresented relative to their share of the general population. However, when considered alongside fostering propensity, a more nuanced picture emerges.

Muslim respondents report substantially higher propensity to foster than any other religious group, suggesting that their representation among foster carers would be expected to be correspondingly higher. The fact that this is not fully reflected in the composition of the foster carer population indicates a partial translation of willingness to foster into participation. In this sense, the findings suggest that while there are already more Muslim foster carers than would be expected based solely on population, there is actually potential for even more Muslims to become foster carers.

Muslim foster carers are more likely to foster through an independent fostering agency (where 15% of foster carers are Muslim), compared with local authorities (where 5% of foster carers are Muslim). This concentration of Muslim foster carers within independent fostering agencies further suggests that this gap may be shaped by differences in recruitment pathways, accessibility, or institutional trust, rather than underlying demand. Local authorities may simply not have the budget, resources, specialist knowledge, or confidence to run targeted recruitment campaigns, and this could be an avenue to explore to bolster recruitment.

Taken together, these findings indicate significant untapped recruitment potential among groups with high propensity to foster, and suggest that improving engagement with these communities—particularly within local authority fostering services—could play an important role in expanding and diversifying the foster carer base.

Sexuality

The vast majority of foster carers in England identify as heterosexual (95%), with around 5% identifying as gay or lesbian, 1% as bisexual, and a very small proportion reporting another sexual orientation. Gay and lesbian individuals are slightly overrepresented among foster carers relative to their share of the general population (approximately 2%). This pattern is broadly consistent with fostering propensity data, which indicates higher-than-average willingness to foster among this group.

Propensity and participation

Taken together, these findings suggest a complex relationship between propensity and participation. Some groups that express greater openness to fostering (Muslims, LGBT individuals) are slightly more likely to be represented within the foster carer population, although not always as much as their propensity as indicated by survey results would suggest. This contrasts with patterns observed for other characteristics, especially age, where high propensity does not always translate into equivalent levels of participation.

The findings therefore suggest that, for some groups, expressed willingness to foster is more effectively converted into actual participation than for others. This implies that barriers operating between initial interest and becoming a foster carer are not experienced equally across the population. Where groups display high propensity but remain under-represented among foster carers, structural, practical, or institutional obstacles may be limiting conversion from interest to action.

Population-based modelling of fostering propensity

This section of the report covers the results of a new survey commissioned by Coram that aims to provide an estimate of the number of potential new foster carers in England. Fieldwork took place between 2nd and 14th July 2026, with the survey carried out entirely online. The figures have been weighted to be representative of all adults in England (aged 18+). The total sample size was 3,497.

Can 10,000 new foster carers be recruited over the current Parliament?

The main aim of this survey was to answer the question of whether it is feasible to recruit 10,000 new foster carers over the course of the current Parliament. With this in mind, the first question of the survey asked respondents:

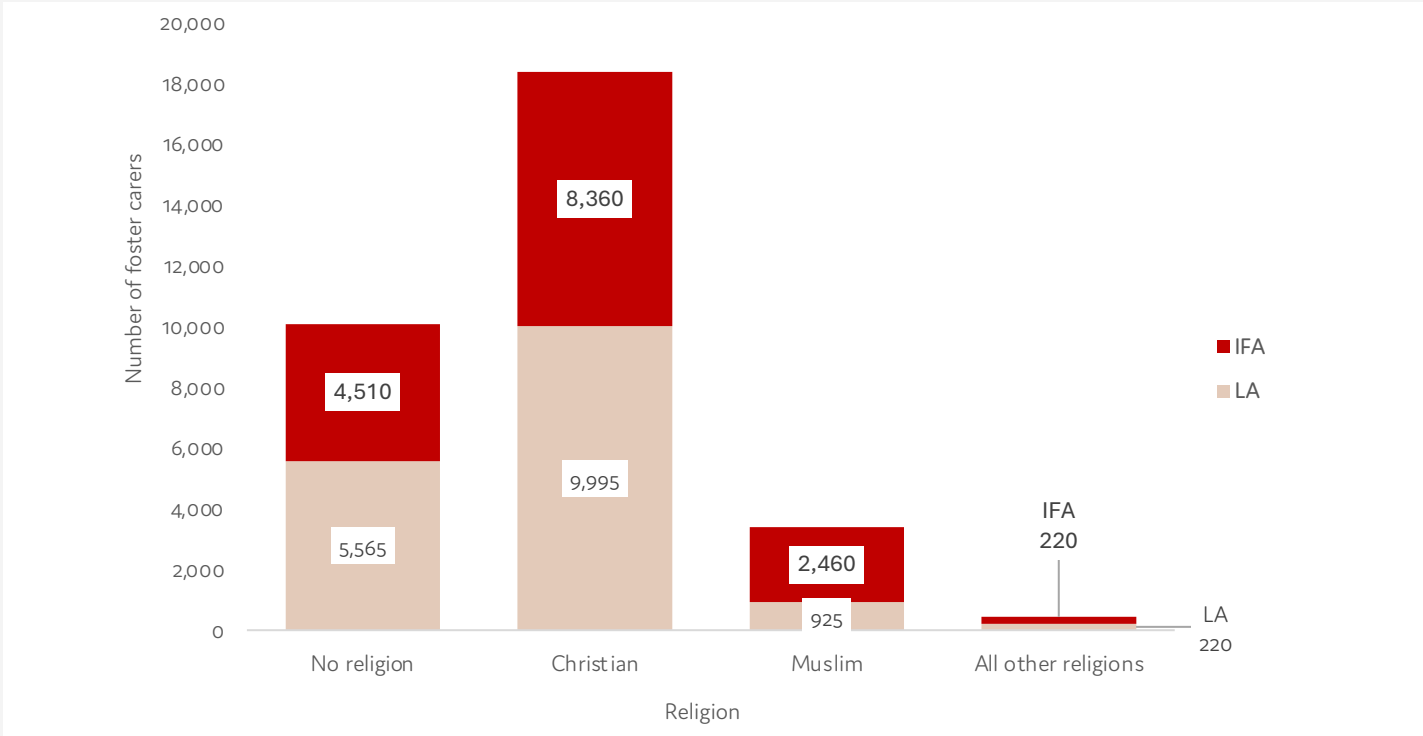
‘How likely or unlikely are you to apply to become a foster carer at any point in the future?’

In total, 1.1% (95% CI: 0.81%-1.54%) of respondents said that they would ‘definitely do this’ in response to this question. Extrapolated to the adult (aged 18+) population of England as a whole (46.44 million, according to the latest available ONS mid-year population estimates), this finding suggests that there may be 513,045 (95% CI: 371,497-705,844) adults in England who would say that they will definitely apply to foster a child at any point in the future. When taking into account all positive responses (those that replied ‘I will definitely do this’, ‘I am very likely to do this’, or ‘I am fairly likely to do this’), this figure rises to 3.4 million adults.

Our figure of 513,045 adults in England who might say that they will definitely apply to become a foster carer ‘at any point in the future’ is very similar to Scott and Duncan’s (2013) figure of 590,000 adults who might say that they would be certain to consider becoming a foster carer ‘some time in the future’ (see Table 2, below). Similarly, our figure of 3.4 million adults who might say that they are either definitely, very likely, or fairly likely to apply to become a foster carer at any point in the future is similar to the 4.6 million saying the same in Scott and Duncan’s (2013) survey.

It is important to note that the surveys asked subtly different questions, with slightly different answer options. Our survey asked respondents to tell us the likelihood of *applying* to become a foster carer at any point in the future and within the next three years, while Scott and Duncan (2013) asked for the likelihood that respondents would ‘actually consider’ becoming a foster carer ‘some time in the future’. The slightly lower figures in our study are likely to be a reflection of the more precise language used; actually applying to foster is a more concrete action than simply considering doing so, and it is to be expected that numbers would therefore be lower.

Figure 3. Foster carers (as of 31 March 2025) by religion and local authority/IFA status



4 This information is unknown for a substantial proportion of foster carers (37%) so this figure must be interpreted with some caution.

5 Scott and Duncan’s (2013) propensity index scores are used in this subsection as the demographic breakdowns included with our survey did not provide detailed religious breakdowns, with options only for ‘Christian’, ‘Other religions’, and ‘No religion’.



Interestingly, survey respondents who said that they would definitely foster at any point in the future (1.1% of all respondents) mostly said that they would do so within the next three years (0.98% of all respondents: 95% CI: 0.70%-1.38%). Extrapolated to the English adult population, this suggests that there may be 455,217 (CI: 325,060–640,832) English adults who would say that they are ‘definitely’ going to apply to foster within the next three years. Assuming that this is split evenly over three years, this would suggest 151,739 new applicants per year.

This figure is far higher than the actual annual number of applications. Table 3, below, shows the number of initial enquiries, applications, and approved applications to foster over the last five years (Ofsted, 2025). As can be seen, between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, there were 149,795 initial enquiries about becoming a foster carer, while only 8,290 applications were received. This equates to a conversion rate from enquiry to application of 5.5%. Over the same time period, 2,050 applications were approved, 24.7% of all received applications. The extrapolated survey estimate of 151,739 new applicants per year would suggest that this would lead to 37,480 newly approved foster carers per year, based on the 24.7% approval rate from 2024-2025, which would seem very optimistic given the actual figures, although it does indicate a potential opportunity to improve the application rate and thereby achieve targets without changing the approval rate.

Interestingly, the total number of initial enquiries (149,795) almost exactly matches the estimated number of new applicants per year extrapolated from the proportion of survey respondents saying they would ‘definitely’ apply to foster in the

next three years (151,739). While the survey question specifically asked respondents how likely they were to *apply* to become a foster carer in the next three years, it may be the case that people who have not yet begun the application process conflate making an initial enquiry with making an application, or underestimate how many potential applicants do not apply after making an initial enquiry.

Taking the survey results as a worst-case scenario and assuming that every respondent conflated making an initial enquiry with beginning an application, this would result in 2,077 potential new applicants per year, based on the most recent conversion rate from initial enquiry to approved application of 1.4%. Over the next three years, this would equate to 6,231 new applicants, falling short of the aim of 10,000 new foster carers over the current parliament.

However, this figure assumes that every single survey respondent conflated making an initial enquiry with actually applying, and that only those who said they would ‘definitely’ apply make an initial enquiry. Given that the survey results suggest that there may be 1.68 million adults nationally who would say that they will ‘definitely’, ‘very likely’, or ‘fairly likely’ apply to foster in the next three years, the actual numbers are likely to be higher. If we assume even half of respondents who said that were ‘very likely’ and one tenth of respondents who said they were ‘fairly likely’ to apply to foster within the next three years (along with all of those who say that they will ‘definitely’ apply) even made an initial enquiry, that would equate to 758,379 enquiries and, at the most recent conversion rate of 1.4% from enquiry to successful application, 10,617 successful applicants.

“Findings indicate we can be cautiously optimistic about meeting the overall national target of recruiting 10,000 additional foster carers.”

However, this overlap between fostering and adoption does serve to reinforce the finding that there is a substantial proportion of the population who may be willing to take responsibility for vulnerable children, and that the real challenge remains converting interest into successful applications, rather than generating interest from scratch. Therefore, even worst-case scenarios give cause to be cautiously optimistic when analysing whether the target of 10,000 new foster carers over the course of the current parliament is potentially realisable. Our survey results suggest that there may be substantial willingness to apply to foster, both in the short- and long-term, in the English population. If marketing and advertising campaigns are correctly targeted and if agency responses and support are appropriate, the application process is demystified, financial support is clearly laid out to potential applicants, and myths around fostering are debunked, there is reason to believe that the target can be met.

Table 2: Results of our survey compared to Scott and Duncan (2013) survey questions asking about likelihood of considering or applying to become a foster carer, extrapolated to the adult population in England

	Our survey: ‘How likely or unlikely are you to apply to become a foster carer...		Scott and Duncan (2013): ‘How likely are you to actually consider becoming a foster carer...’
Response (Our survey / 2013 Survey)	‘...at any point in the future?’	‘...within the next 3 years’	‘...some time in the future?’
‘I will definitely do this’/‘I am certain to do this’	513,045	455,217	590,000
‘Definitely/Certain to’ or ‘Very likely to’	1,435,825	906,536	-
‘Definitely/Certain to’, ‘Very likely to’, or ‘Fairly likely to’	3,412,114	1,681,561	4,600,000

Table 3: Number of initial fostering enquiries, applications received, and applications approved in England, 2020-2025

	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Number of initial enquiries	160,635	138,075	125,195	131,055	149,795
Number of applications received	11,235	8,280	8,010	8,485	8,290
Number of applications approved	2,725	1,575	1,740	1,815	2,050
Applications received as a percentage of initial enquiries	7.0%	6.0%	6.4%	6.5%	5.5%
Applications approved as a percentage of applications received	24.3%	19.0%	21.7%	21.4%	24.7%
Applications approved as a percentage of initial enquiries	1.7%	1.1%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%

Demographics of fostering propensity

This subsection will discuss fostering propensity in relation to various demographic breakdowns that are available in the survey data. This section will refer to ‘high fostering propensity’, which in this case means those that answered ‘I will definitely do this’ or ‘I am very likely to do this’ when asked ‘How likely or unlikely are you to apply to become a foster carer at any point in the future/within the next three years?’ We also created a propensity index to measure how much more or less likely than the national average a particular demographic is to be high propensity. For example, if Group A had a score of 1.50, this would indicate that respondents from Group A are 1.5 times more likely than the population average to have high propensity for fostering. The full breakdown of demographic indicators can be found in Appendix 2.

The demographic breakdowns reveal several key groups that have substantially higher fostering propensity than the sample mean across both measures (‘at any point in the future’ and ‘in the next three years’). The first interesting outcome is in the age variable. As shown in Figure 4, below, propensity to foster decreases with age. The age group most likely to be high propensity is those aged 18-24 years old; 8.5% of respondents in this age group have high propensity for fostering at any time in the future, making respondents in the youngest age group 2.74 times more likely to be high propensity than the national average. Interestingly, 4.7% of 18-24 year olds (index score = 2.40) have high propensity for applying to foster within the

next three years, and 2.1% say that they are either already a foster carer (0.9%) or already have an application to foster that is currently in progress (1.3%); only those aged 65+ are more likely to already be a foster carer (1.1%).

This finding is somewhat counter-intuitive; while we might expect this age group to be the most likely to say they will apply to foster in the long-term, it would seem more likely that older age groups would be more likely to apply to foster in the short-term, and that there would be fewer people in this age group who already foster.

As shown in Figure 2, there are currently only 70 registered foster carers aged 20-24 in England, far fewer than would be expected if our survey results were extrapolated to the English population. It is likely that this discrepancy is due to the very small numbers involved; the 0.9% figure is derived from only 3 people aged 18-24 in our survey who say that they already foster. With such small numbers, any extrapolations to the national population should be taken with extreme caution.

Age barriers

In reality, potential foster carers aged 18-24 face multiple challenges to realising their stated ambitions to foster, given rising unemployment rates in this age group (Devine, Powell, & Zaidi, 2026, p.4) and the difficulties of housing. A possible explanation for high propensity (and current fostering rates) among this group is that this may be driven by respondents towards the higher end of this age group, or by those who might not be ready to have their own children but see fostering

Parental status

Another strong indicator of high propensity is parental status. Parents of children aged 18 or under are around twice as likely as the average respondent to say they would definitely or very likely apply to become foster carers at some point in the future (index = 2.06), with the highest propensity among parents of children aged under 12 (indices between 2.60 and 2.71). These groups also show some of the highest short-term propensity scores, suggesting that people currently raising children are both more receptive to fostering and more likely to view it as an immediate possibility. Interestingly, parents of children aged 5-11 are 1.69 times more likely than the national average to say that they already foster or have applied to do so, far higher than for any other age group. For example, while parents of children aged 4 years and under are 2.6 times more likely to say that they will apply to foster at any point in the future, they are only half as likely to currently foster or have an application in progress.

Perhaps related to this is that larger households are also more likely to be high-propensity than single or two-person households (see Figure 5, below). People living in households of four or more people are 1.97 times more likely to be high propensity for any point in the future, and 2.06 times more likely to apply to foster in the next three years. People in households of three or more people are also most likely to say that they currently foster or have an application in progress, although this may be simply a function of the fact that fostering a child as a couple means that the household must necessarily have 3 or more people in it.

Figure 4: Fostering propensity index score (indexed to national average at 1) for fostering at any time in the future, by age group

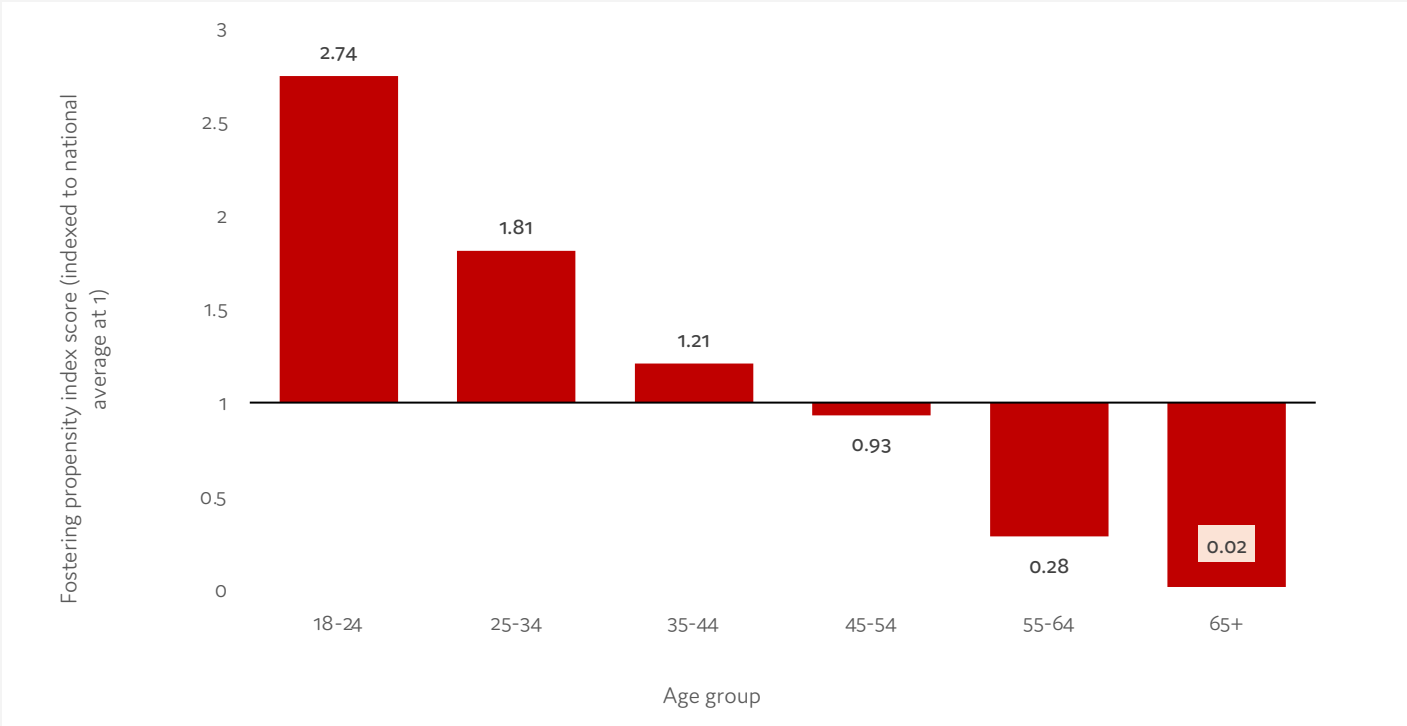
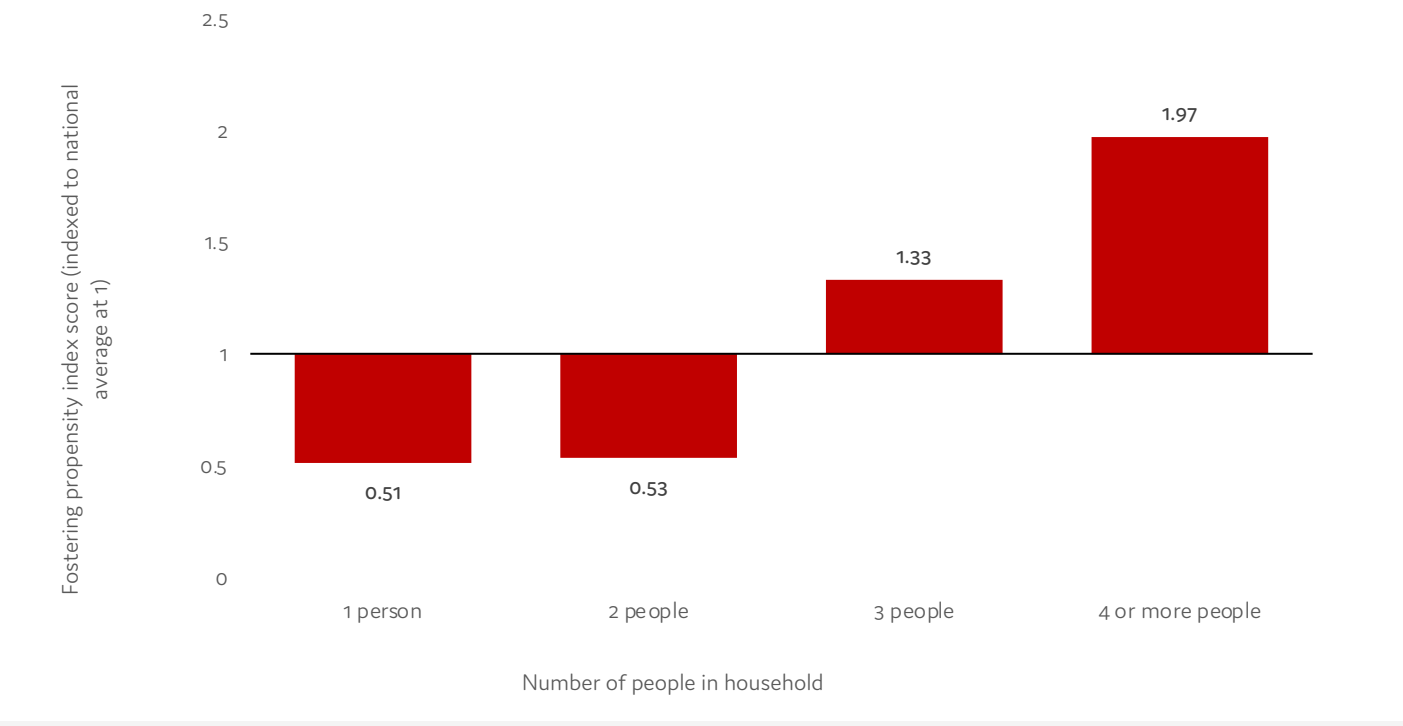


Figure 5: Fostering propensity index score (indexed to national average at 1) for fostering at any time in the future, by number of people in household



Socioeconomic status

Interestingly, several indicators point towards higher propensity among people experiencing greater socioeconomic disadvantage. Respondents living in the most deprived areas, those in lower income households (below £40,000), renters (particularly private renters), unemployed respondents, and those living in social housing all demonstrate above-average propensity.

All of these groups except for those living in social housing and private renters were also more likely than average to already foster or to have already applied to do so. Conversely, home-owners, particularly those who own their home outright, and respondents living in the least deprived areas show consistently below-average levels of propensity for applying to foster.

This picture is not clear-cut, however, with people earning above £60,000 or with a social grade of AB also being more likely to say that they will apply to foster than the national average. This could suggest that intention to foster is more likely among people at both extremes of the economic spectrum, but less likely for those who fall in the middle. More research is needed to understand why this might be the case but targeted marketing can explore this potential in action.

Ethnic background

Ethnicity is another strong differentiator. Respondents from minoritised ethnic backgrounds are considerably more likely than White respondents both to express an intention to foster (see Figure 6, below), and to already do so. In particular, respondents who identify as Black exhibit the highest propensity of any demographic subgroup analysed, with a high propensity index of 6.11 for fostering at any point in the future and 5.66 for fostering within the next three years.

Respondents identifying as mixed ethnicity and respondents from other minoritised ethnic backgrounds also display above-average propensity. It is important to note that respondents who identify as Black make up only 4.0% of the sample, and further sub-group analysis would therefore be dealing with very small numbers and make generalisations difficult.

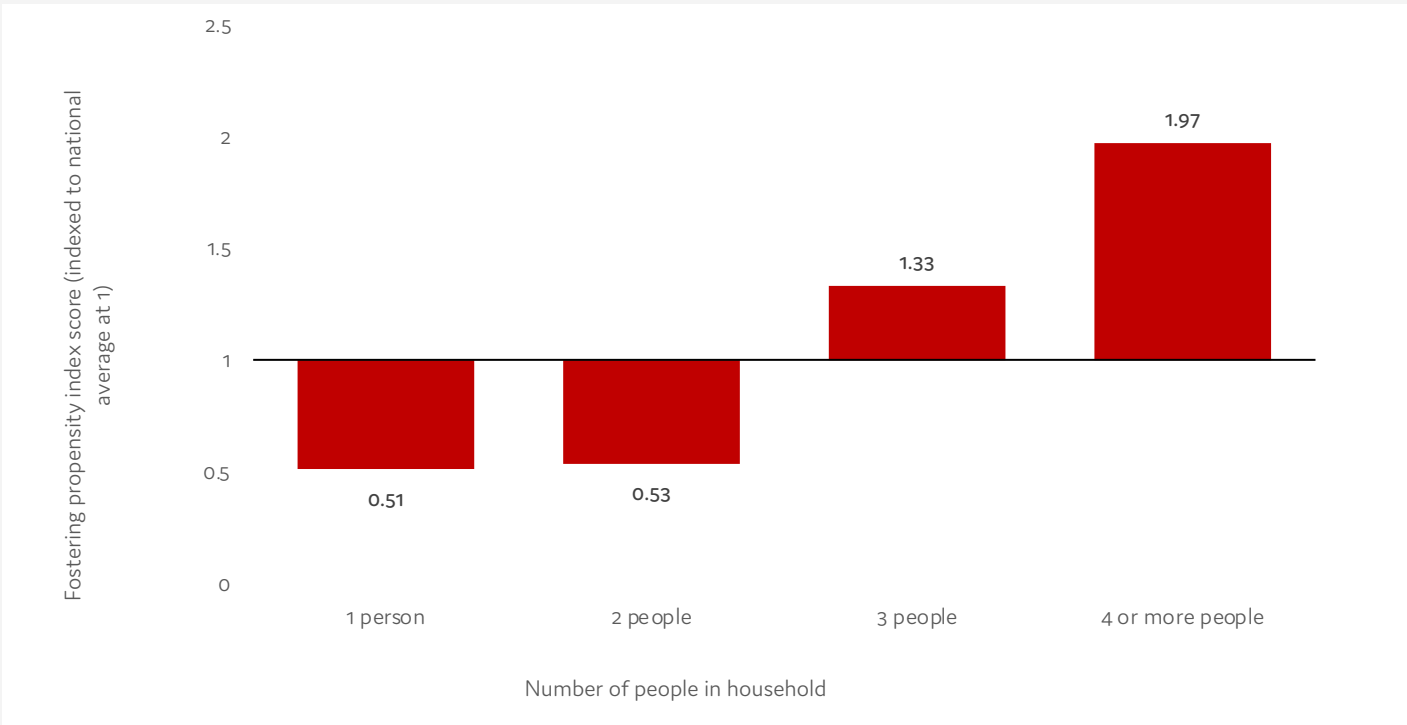
Other groups with very high propensity to foster at any time in the future includes: those working in construction (index score of 3.17) or IT and telecoms (3.48); respondents who identify as bisexual (1.86) or ‘other’ sexuality (2.36); respondents who support charities working in poverty relief or international development (2.15), social care and welfare (1.95), and disability (1.70); and respondents whose main news source is social media (1.69).

Logistic regression model of demographics of fostering propensity

Alongside the analysis of the propensity indices, we also ran a logistic regression analysis on the demographic indicators of fostering propensity, to determine which factors were statistically significantly associated with high propensity to foster. Logistic regression is a statistical analysis method that is used to determine the odds of a variable to be related to the dependent variable (in this case, high fostering propensity), as well as whether this relationship is statistically significant when all other variables are factored in. In other words, it allows us to determine which demographic variables are independently associated with high fostering propensity when we control for all other variables in our study.

As detailed in the methodology, many of the variables were recoded to include fewer groupings, in order to bolster the analytical power of the model. For example, the sexuality variable was recoded into a binary ‘heterosexual’ or ‘LGBTQIA+’, and the ‘Charitable causes supported’ variable was recoded into ‘Children’, ‘Any other cause’, and ‘No causes’. In addition, high propensity for the purposes of this regression model was defined as anybody responding that they were ‘definitely’, ‘very likely’, or ‘fairly likely’ to apply to foster at any point in the future, as well as those who said that they either already fostered, or had already applied to do so. A full breakdown of the included variables can be found in Table 4, below, while a detailed breakdown of the method used can be found in the methodology section.

Figure 6: Fostering propensity index score (indexed to national average at 1) for fostering at any time in the future, by ethnicity⁶



6 The survey also included a category for people of ‘Other’ ethnicity, but the number of respondents in this category was too low to give reliable data and so they have been excluded from this graph.



As can be seen in Table 4, below, a number of demographic characteristics were statistically significantly related to fostering propensity. The odds of having high propensity to foster were significantly higher for those who:

- **Were female;** women were 1.32 times more likely to be high propensity to foster than males
- **Were younger;** for each additional year of age, there was approximately 5% lower odds of having high fostering propensity
- **Had larger households;** those with households of four or more people were 1.82 times more likely, and those with households of three or more people were 1.62 times more likely, to have high fostering propensity than those with only one person in their household
- **Had a lower household income;** those with an income of up to £40,000 were 1.40 times more likely to be high propensity than those with household income over £40,000
- **Were more deprived;** those who were in the most deprived category were 1.43 times more likely than those in the least deprived category
- **Were Christian,** or of another faith; Christians were 1.82 times more likely, and other faiths were 2.32 times more likely, to be high propensity to foster than those with no faith
- **Were LGBTQIA+;** individuals who identified as LGBTQIA+ were 1.48 times more likely to be high propensity than those who identified as heterosexual
- **Gave to charitable causes that involved children;** people who gave to children’s charities were 1.51 times more likely to be high propensity to foster than those giving to any other charitable causes
- **Rented their home;** those who rent their home were 1.64 times more likely to be high propensity than those who own their home
- **Had young children;** those with at least one children under the age of 12 were 1.85 times more likely to be high propensity to foster than those with no children

Table 4: Results of logistic regression model of high fostering propensity

Indicator	Responses	Regression coefficient	Odds ratio (Expb)	Confidence interval	P (sig)
Intercept		-1.65	0.19	0.09-0.41	<0.001**
Gender	Male (ref)				
	Female	0.28	1.32	1.03-1.70	0.03*
Age		-0.05	0.95	0.94-0.96	<0.001**
Household size	1 (ref)				
	2	0.21	1.23	0.82-1.88	0.33
	3	0.48	1.62	1.03-2.57	0.04*
	4 or more	0.60	1.82	1.17-2.87	0.008**
	Not given	0.01	0.99	0.36-2.43	0.98
Gross household income	More than £40,000 (ref)				
	Up to £40,000	0.33	1.39	1.04-1.87	0.03*
	Not given	-0.12	0.89	0.61-1.28	0.54
Religion	No faith (ref)				
	Christian	0.60	1.82	1.33-2.49	<0.001**
	Other faiths	0.84	2.32	1.53-3.46	<0.001**
	Not given	1.31	3.69	2.53-5.35	<0.001**
Sexuality	Heterosexual (ref)				
	LGBTQIA+	0.39	1.48	1.04-2.08	0.03*
	Not given	0.34	1.40	0.87-2.21	0.15
Charitable causes	Any other causes (ref)				
	Children	0.42	1.51	1.02-2.23	0.04*
	No causes	-0.05	0.95	0.70-1.28	0.72
Volunteered in last year	No (ref)				
	Yes	0.37	1.44	0.96-2.12	0.07
Home ownership	Owned (ref)				
	Rented	0.50	1.64	1.20-2.26	0.002**
	Neither/Other	0.02	1.02	0.67-1.57	0.91
	Not given	0.59	1.80	1.02-3.10	0.04*
Parent/guardian	No children (ref)				
	Children 11 or under	0.61	1.85	1.26-2.72	0.001**
	Children 12 or over	0.31	1.36	0.87-2.15	0.18

Key: ** = significant at 1% level; * = significant at 5% level

Local authority mapping of fostering propensity

Applying fostering propensity indices derived from our survey of fostering propensity has allowed us to estimate the distribution of potential foster carers across England according to demographic categories available in the Census data. We were able to match ten separate demographics from our survey to the census data, which were: sex; age; marital status; religion; housing tenure; sexuality; employment status; ethnicity; number of people in household; and social grade.

The proportion of each demographic category in each upper tier local authority was combined with each demographic indicator’s propensity score into one overall propensity score for that local authority. This was then indexed to the national average (1.00), with a score of 1.20, for example, indicating that a local authority’s propensity score is 1.2 times higher than the national average. Figure 7, overleaf, shows the full results of this mapping, with darker colours indicating a larger proportion of residents with high propensity for fostering. Through this mapping we have been able to identify those local authorities with the highest and lowest fostering propensity according to their demographic characteristics (see Table 5, below).

As shown in both Table 5 and Figure 7, high propensity local authorities appear to be in urban areas, and in particular, in London; nine of the top ten are London boroughs. The demographic characteristics determining high and low

propensity between local authorities do naturally vary on an individual basis, but there are also common trends. If we compare for example the highest propensity local authority, Newham, and the lowest propensity local authority, Dorset, we see that Newham (Fostering Propensity [FP] = 1.27) has high proportions of the following demographics groups, which have higher than average propensity to foster:

- A higher proportion of people aged 18-24 (FP = 2.74) and 25-34 (FP = 1.81) compared with the national average (18-24 = 14% in Newham vs. 11% nationally; 25-34 = 27% vs. 17%).
- A much higher proportion of people identifying with a religion other than Christianity (FP = 2.27) compared with the national average (47% vs. 12%)
- A higher proportion of households with four or more people (FP = 1.97) than the national average (34% vs. 20%).
- A higher proportion of people renting from a private landlord (FP = 2.86) than the national average (39% vs. 20%)
- A higher proportion of people from a Black background (FP = 6.11) than nationally (17% vs. 4%).

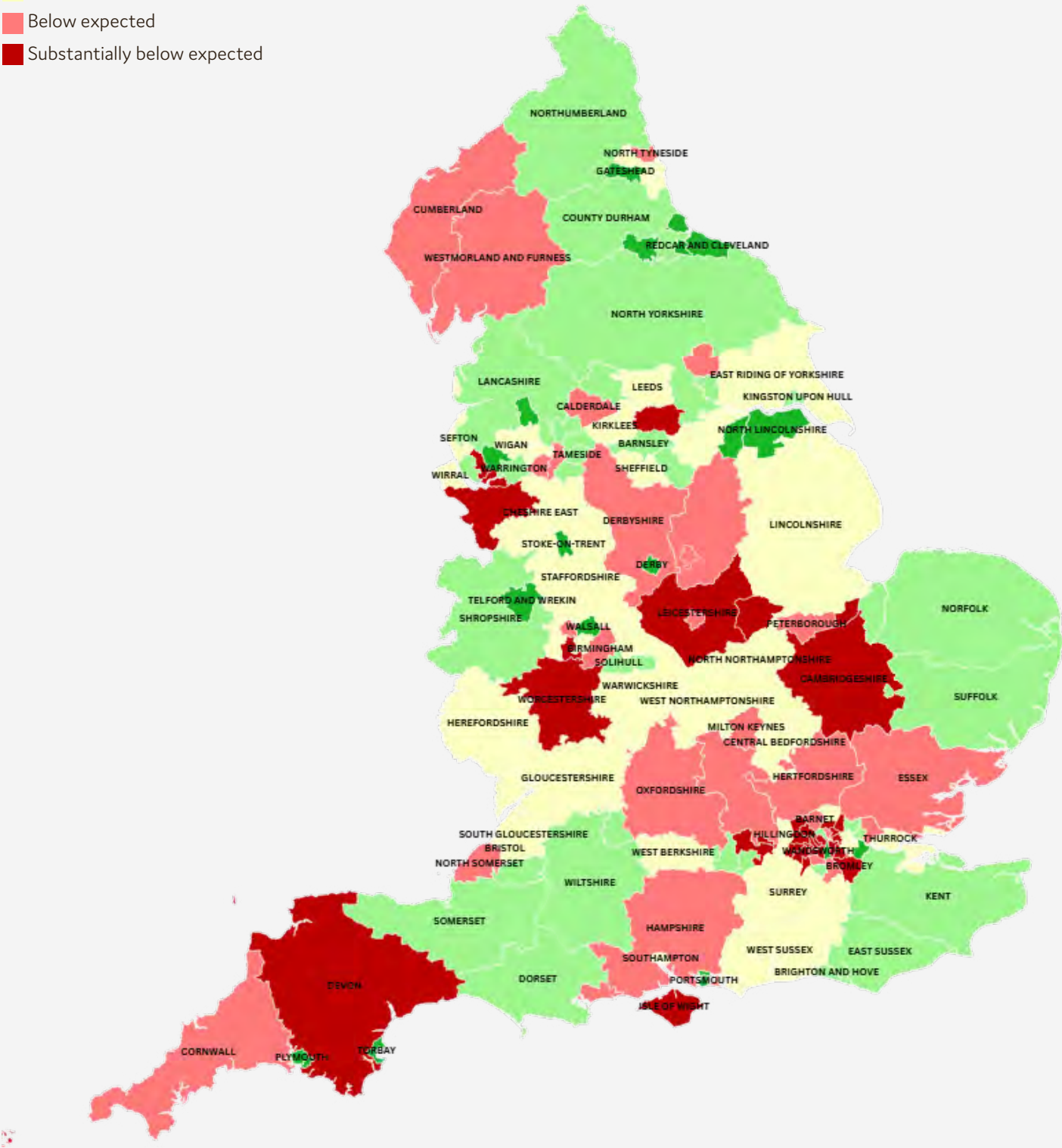
Newham’s high propensity is largely driven by its relatively high proportion of people from a Black background. People from a Black background have the highest fostering propensity of any single demographic indicator at 6.11, and Newham has the 7th highest Black population of all upper tier local authorities in England, at 17%.

Table 5: Ten highest and lowest ranking local authorities by fostering propensity index mapped to population characteristics

Highest ranking local authorities for fostering propensity	Overall fostering propensity index	Lowest ranking local authorities for fostering propensity	Overall fostering propensity index
Newham	1.27	Dorset	0.89
Brent	1.23	Isle of Wight	0.90
Tower Hamlets	1.22	Northumberland	0.90
Barking and Dagenham	1.21	East Riding of Yorkshire	0.90
Hackney	1.21	Westmorland and Furness	0.91
Southwark	1.20	Cumberland	0.91
Lambeth	1.20	Redcar and Cleveland	0.91
Lewisham	1.20	North Yorkshire	0.91
Redbridge	1.19	Derbyshire	0.91
Slough	1.18	Herefordshire	0.91

Figure 8: Number of newly-approved foster carers compared to expected numbers based on population, England⁸

- Substantially above expected
- Above expected
- In line with expected
- Below expected
- Substantially below expected



8 The full, interactive map can be found here: <https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/29877215/>

Motivations for fostering

In addition to the questions about fostering propensity, we asked three questions about the factors that might motivate people to foster, as well as the types of support and messaging that might make respondents more likely to consider applying to foster.

The first question we asked was ‘Which, if any, of the following would most motivate you to consider applying to become a foster carer?’, with respondents asked to select up to three factors. Table 6 shows a summary of the answers to this question. The first thing to note is that while 81% of respondents said that they are unlikely to apply or definite not to apply to become a foster carer at any point in the future, only 53% of respondents answered that ‘nothing would motivate me to consider applying to become a foster carer’. This suggests that people might value the idea of becoming a foster carer, but feel like it is not for them, that they would not be successful, or simply that they do not feel like they have the knowledge to make an informed assessment of their likelihood to foster.

Looking at each individual answer, the most frequently selected response option was ‘Wanting to help children’, which was selected by 29% of respondents, followed by ‘Wanting to make a difference to society’ (17%) and ‘Enjoying caring for children’ and ‘Feeling like you would make a good foster parent’ (12% each). It is interesting to note that the two most-selected options are both external motivations, where the focus is on the benefits to children and society as a whole, rather than more internal motivations such as enjoying caring for children or feeling like part of a community.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, wanting to help children (selected by 29% of respondents overall) was a particularly strong motivator for people who are already parents, especially if their child is under 18; 44% of this group selected this response. This was also true for people with a household size of four or more (42%), although there is significant crossover between these two groups. Again unsurprisingly, those working in education were also motivated by wanting to help children (41%). People who support the causes of ‘poverty relief and international development’ (41%) and ‘the community’ (40%) were also very motivated by wanting to help children, as were full-time students (41%) and people identifying as bisexual (48%).

Wanting to make a difference to society was the second most-selected response overall (17%). This option was particularly important to younger adults (25% of 18-24 year olds and 26% of 25-34 year olds) and full-time students (29%). Black respondents were more likely to select this option than any other demographic group (30%). This was also an important factor for LGB respondents, with 26% of respondents identifying as gay or lesbian and 25% of respondents identifying as bisexual selecting this answer.

Enjoying caring for children (12% overall) and wanting to be a parent (10%) overall were also strong motivators for certain demographics. 26% of respondents aged 18-24 and who were full-time students selected ‘wanting to be a parent’ in their top three motivators, while parents/guardians of children aged four years or under were strongly motivated by enjoying caring for children (29%) and wanting to help children (48%).

Table 6: Summary of answers to ‘Which, if any, of the following would most motivate you to consider applying to become a foster carer?’ (Please select up to three answers).

n	3,497
Wanting to help children	29%
Wanting to make a difference to society	17%
Enjoying caring for children	12%
Feeling like you would make a good foster parent	12%
Wanting to be a parent	10%
Feeling emotionally rewarded	8%
Encouragement and support from friends or family	3%
Feeling like part of a community	2%
Other	4%
Not applicable – nothing would motivate me to consider applying to become a foster carer	53%
Net: Any motivation	47%

The second question asked was ‘Which, if any, of the following would make you more likely to consider applying to become a foster carer?’ Answer options were more focused on what support people feel like they might need to make fostering more viable for them. Table 7, below, shows the full results for this question. Similarly to the previous question, 56% of respondents said that nothing would make them more likely to consider applying to become a foster carer, with 6% answering ‘Don’t know’, leaving 38% that selected at least one thing that would make them more likely to consider applying.

What influences propensity

The most selected answer option was ‘financial support’, which was selected by 19% of respondents, representing half of all respondents that selected at least one reason. This was followed by ‘clear information about the fostering process’ (14%) and ‘support to help caring for children with complex needs or trauma’ (12%).

Financial support was particularly important to younger respondents: 27% of 18-24 year olds, 30% of 25-34 year olds, and 28% of 35-44 year olds said that financial support would make them more likely to consider applying to foster. This was also an important facilitator for people working in the public sector (26%) or education (32%), those with a household size of four or more (29%), those who identify as bisexual (33%), people renting from a private landlord (28%), and for parents of children aged four or under (36%), 5-11 (30%), and 12 to 16 (28%).

Alongside financial support, more than a quarter (27%) of respondents aged 18-24 said that clear information about the

fostering process would make them more likely to consider applying to become a foster carer. This option was also an important consideration for full-time students (although again, there is likely to be considerable overlap between full-time students and 18-24 year olds), 34% of whom selected this option. More than a quarter of full-time students (28%) also selected ‘support to help caring for children with complex needs or trauma’, which was also a consideration for respondents who identify as bisexual (26%) or give their sexuality as ‘Other’ (28%). Parents/guardians of children aged 4 years and under also frequently selected this option (27%).

What types of messages matter

The third question asked was ‘Which, if any, types of messages would most encourage you to apply to become a foster carer?’ Respondents were asked to select up to three options. Table 8, below, shows the full results for this question. Again, 56% of respondents said that nothing would make them more likely to consider applying to become a foster carer, with a further 5% answering ‘Don’t know’. The answer options covered both internal motivations for potential foster carers, as well as the types of support that might make people more likely to apply to become a foster carer.

The top two most selected answers reflect the top answers from each of the previous questions. ‘Helping vulnerable children’ was selected by 21% of respondents, while 16% said messaging about the ‘financial support available’ would encourage them to apply. The next most selected options were ‘making a difference to society’ (14%), the emotional rewards of fostering (10%), and the support available from agencies (10%).

Again, parents/guardians and those in households of four or more were very motivated by messaging around helping vulnerable children, with more than a third of parents of children aged four years and under (36%) and children aged 5 to 11 years (34%) selecting this option, as well as 32% of people in households of four or more people (although again, there is considerable overlap with parents). Full-time students (43%) were most likely to be motivated by messaging around supporting vulnerable children, as were 18-24 year olds (32%).

Synthesising results from all three questions leads to some interesting insights. Firstly, key motivators for applying to foster are both ideological and practical. Respondents place a high value on wanting to help children, both in terms of what would motivate them to apply foster, and what messaging would encourage them to do so. This is especially true among younger respondents/students and those who are already parents/guardians. On the other hand, respondents are practical about the need for financial support, and clarity around what support is available to potential foster carers.

The findings therefore suggest that there is an important distinction between the underlying motivation to foster and the conditions that would make fostering feel achievable. The strongest motivations are centred on helping vulnerable children and making a positive contribution to society, while the most important facilitators relate to financial security, clear information and support to manage the practical and emotional demands of fostering.

Secondly, the results also suggest a gap between potential interest in fostering and the factors that might translate that interest into action. While 47% of respondents identified at least one factor that would motivate them to consider applying, only 38% identified at least one factor that would make them more likely to actually apply, and 39% identified at least one type of message that would encourage them to do so.

This suggests that some people may be positively disposed towards the idea of fostering in principle, but do not necessarily see themselves as realistic potential applicants. The relatively high proportion selecting factors such as clear information about eligibility and the fostering process, alongside support for caring for children with complex needs or trauma, points towards uncertainty about suitability and the practical demands of the role as important barriers to conversion.

Lessons for recruitment

These findings suggest that recruitment communications need to do more than simply raise awareness of the need for foster carers. Messages that emphasise the positive difference that fostering can make may be effective in generating initial interest, but this interest should be accompanied by clear and credible information about financial support, eligibility, the application process and the support available to carers in order to encourage people to take the next step.

Given that this study has found that there may be a sizeable population of people in England who are inclined to apply to foster, it is of utmost importance that their willingness to do so is bolstered by sufficient reassurances that fostering is both personally meaningful and practically viable.

Table 7: Summary of answers to ‘Which, if any, of the following would make you more likely to consider applying to become a foster carer?’

n	3,447
Financial support	19%
Clear information about the fostering process	14%
Support to help caring for children with complex needs or trauma	12%
Clear information about eligibility	9%
A streamlined application and approvals process	8%
Employer support	8%
Flexible fostering arrangements	7%
Support integrating foster children into current family dynamics (e.g. other children)	7%
Other	3%
Don’t know	6%
Not applicable – nothing would make me more likely to consider applying to become a foster carer	56%
Net: Any reason	38%

Note: n = 3,447 due to item non-response

Table 8: Summary of answers to ‘Which, if any, types of messages would most encourage you to apply to become a foster carer? (Please select up to three answers)’

n	3,447
Helping vulnerable children	21%
Financial support available	16%
Making a difference to society	14%
Emotional rewards of fostering	10%
Support available from agencies	10%
Stories from existing foster carers	9%
Flexibility of fostering	8%
Seeing people like you represented in marketing and advertisements for fostering	5%
Other	1%
Don’t know	5%
Not applicable – no specific types of messages would encourage me to explore applying to become a foster carer	56%
Note: n = 3,447 due to item non-response	

Conclusion

Bringing together evidence from the literature, analysis of national fostering data, and a new survey of fostering propensity, the findings suggest that recruiting 10,000 additional foster carers is achievable, but that this will depend upon targeting the people and places where fostering propensity is highest, and this is not evenly distributed by area.

The evidence consistently points to a substantial reservoir of latent interest in fostering. **Our survey** indicates that there could be hundreds of thousands of adults in England who see themselves as certain to apply to foster both at some point in the future and within the next three years, with many more who see themselves as likely to do so. Although stated intentions from survey results clearly do not translate directly into applications, the scale of potential interest is considerably larger than the number of foster carers required to meet the government’s ambitions. The challenge, therefore, is likely to be less one of generating entirely new interest and more one of motivating and enabling these people to actually apply and removing the barriers that prevent interested individuals from progressing through the recruitment process.

The **literature review** highlights the importance of practical barriers in shaping recruitment outcomes. Studies have shown that people remain uncertain about their eligibility to foster, the approval process, the support available to carers, and their ability to meet the needs of children in care, with financial concerns being prominent. While financial reward is rarely the primary motivation for fostering, respondents to our survey identified financial support, clarity about the fostering process, and support for caring for children with complex needs as factors that would make fostering feel more achievable. These findings suggest that recruitment campaigns should be designed not only to inspire interest but also to build confidence and address uncertainty.

The analysis also demonstrates that fostering potential is unevenly distributed across England. Rates of children entering care vary substantially between local authorities, creating very different levels of demand for fostering placements. At the same time, our population-based modelling shows that fostering propensity is highest in many urban and ethnically diverse areas, particularly London boroughs.

Expanding fostering capacity will therefore require a whole-system approach that provides strong support to current carers while also targeting the recruitment of new carers.

In a number of these areas, actual recruitment falls well below the levels that would be expected based on population characteristics, suggesting significant untapped potential. This finding reinforces the need for geographically-targeted recruitment strategies that are sensitive to local demographics and local demand.

The **demographic analysis** provides further evidence that some groups may represent under-utilised recruitment opportunities:

- Younger adults,
- people from Black and other minoritised ethnic backgrounds,
- people of faith,
- parents of dependent children,
- and those living in larger households.

All display higher-than-average propensity to foster.

However, these characteristics are not always reflected proportionately within the current foster carer population and more tailored approaches may be needed to engage populations with particularly high levels of latent propensity.

Finally, the findings of the rapid literature review highlight the importance of retention alongside recruitment. Recruiting additional carers will have limited impact if existing carers continue to leave the fostering workforce at a similar rate.

Evidence from the literature suggests that practical, emotional and peer support can improve carers’ wellbeing and strengthen retention. Expanding fostering capacity will therefore require a whole-system approach that provides strong support to current carers while also targeting the recruitment of new carers.

Taken together, the evidence from this study supports cautious optimism. England does not appear to lack people willing to consider becoming a foster carer. Instead, the key challenge is creating a system that enables willing individuals to translate interest into action. If recruitment efforts are targeted effectively, barriers are reduced, support is clearly communicated, and local strategies are aligned with patterns of need and propensity, the ambition of recruiting 10,000 additional foster carers over the current Parliament seems potentially attainable, if unlikely to be able to be achieved in ways which lead to sufficiency in every geographical area.

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Appendix 1:

Questions and answer options from survey

Question 1: How likely or unlikely are you to apply to become a foster carer at any point in the future? *(Please select one answer only)*

- I will definitely do this
- I am very likely to do this
- I am fairly likely to do this
- I am fairly unlikely to do this
- I am very unlikely to do this
- I will definitely not do this
- Not applicable – I am already a foster carer
- Not applicable – I have already made an application that is currently in progress
- Don’t know

Note: respondents who selected ‘I will definitely not do this’ or either of the ‘not applicable’ options were not asked Question 2, and instead skipped straight to Question 3.

Question 2: How likely or unlikely are you to apply to become a foster carer within the next three years? *(Please select one answer only)*

- I will definitely do this
- I am very likely to do this
- I am fairly likely to do this
- I am fairly unlikely
- I am very unlikely to do this
- I will definitely not do this
- Don’t know

Question 3: Which, if any, of the following would most motivate you to consider applying to become a foster carer? *(Please select up to three answers)*

- Wanting to help children
- Wanting to make a difference to society
- Enjoying caring for children
- Feeling like you would make a good foster parent
- Wanting to be a parent
- Feeling emotionally rewarded
- Encouragement and support from friends or family
- Feeling like part of a community
- Other (please specify)
- Not applicable – nothing would motivate me to consider applying to become a foster carer

Question 4: Which, if any, of the following would make you more likely to consider applying to become a foster carer? *(Please select up to three answers)*

- Clear information about eligibility
- Clear information about the fostering process
- A streamlined application and approvals process
- Financial support
- Support to help caring for children with complex needs or trauma
- Support integrating foster children into current family dynamics (e.g. other children)
- Flexible fostering arrangements
- Employer support
- Other (please specify)
- Don’t know
- Not applicable – nothing would make me more likely to consider applying to become a foster carer

Question 5: Which, if any, types of messages would most encourage you to explore applying to become a foster carer? *(Please select up to three answers)*

- Helping vulnerable children
- Making a difference to society
- Emotional rewards of fostering
- Financial support available
- Flexibility of fostering
- Stories from existing foster carers
- Seeing people like you represented in marketing and advertisements for fostering
- Support available from agencies
- Other (please specify)
- Don’t know
- Not applicable – no specific types of messages would encourage me to explore applying to become a foster carer

Appendix 2:

Full demographic breakdown of survey questions about fostering propensity

The following table contains a full demographic breakdown of the two fostering propensity questions from our survey. These questions asked ‘How likely or unlikely are you to apply to become a foster carer at any point in the future?’ and ‘How likely or unlikely are you to apply to become a foster carer

within the next three years?’ Results from both questions are presented in the table. High propensity is defined as the proportion of respondents who selected ‘I will definitely do this’ or ‘I am very likely to do this’. The index score shows the proportion of respondents with high propensity for fostering, indexed to the national average at 1.00. To take an example, within the Age category, 18-24 year olds have a high propensity index score of 2.74, indicates that a person in this group is 2.74 times more likely to be high propensity than the national average.

Category	Group	% of total sample	At any time in the future		In the next three years	
			Percent - high propensity	Index score	Percent -high propensity	Index score
Total	Total	100%	3.1%	1.00	2.0%	1.00
Gender	Male	48%	3.2%	1.04	2.3%	1.20
	Female	52%	3.0%	0.97	1.6%	0.81
Age	18-24	10%	8.5%	2.74	4.7%	2.40
	25-34	17%	5.6%	1.81	3.0%	1.53
	35-44	17%	3.7%	1.21	3.7%	1.90
	45-54	17%	2.9%	0.93	1.5%	0.75
	55-64	16%	0.9%	0.28	0.5%	0.27
	65+	23%	0.1%	0.02	0.1%	0.03
Social grade	AB	23%	3.7%	1.18	2.7%	1.37
	C1	31%	2.6%	0.85	1.8%	0.92
	C2	21%	2.9%	0.94	1.3%	0.67
	DE	25%	3.3%	1.07	2.0%	1.03
Ethnicity	White	83%	2.3%	0.74	1.5%	0.75
	Mixed	2%	6.7%	2.15	6.2%	3.16
	Asian	9%	3.8%	1.23	2.1%	1.06
	Black	4%	18.9%	6.11	11.0%	5.66
	Other	2%	0.0%	0.00	-	-
Working status	Working full-time	43%	3.5%	1.14	2.8%	1.41
	Working part-time	14%	4.2%	1.35	1.9%	0.96
	Full-time student	5%	5.9%	1.91	2.5%	1.28
	Retired	23%	0.3%	0.10	0.2%	0.09
	Unemployed	6%	6.5%	2.10	3.6%	1.83
	Not working	6%	2.7%	0.89	1.3%	0.68
	Other	3%	2.2%	0.72	1.1%	0.59

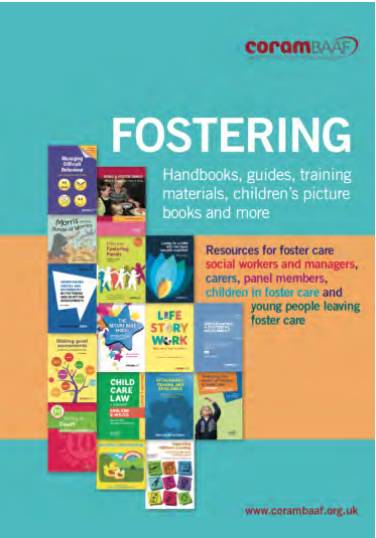
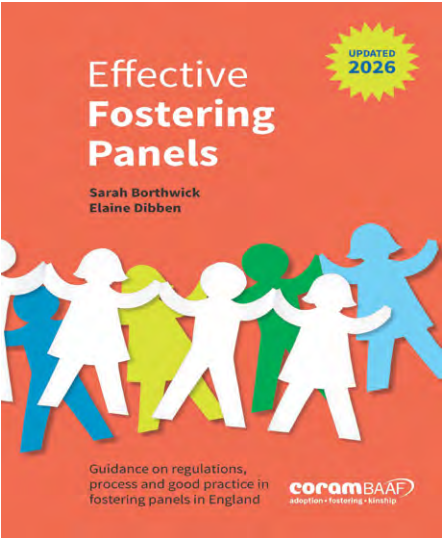
Category	Group	% of total sample	At any time in the future		In the next three years	
			Percent - high propensity	Index score	Percent -high propensity	Index score
Work Sector	Private sector	33%	4.0%	1.29	2.7%	1.40
	Public sector	21%	3.0%	0.98	2.4%	1.22
	Third sector	6%	1.7%	0.56	1.3%	0.69
Household size	1	21%	1.6%	0.51	1.2%	0.62
	2	37%	1.7%	0.53	1.0%	0.53
	3	18%	4.1%	1.33	2.1%	1.05
	4 or more	21%	6.1%	1.97	4.0%	2.06
Annual Household income	Up to £19,999	14%	4.2%	1.37	2.3%	1.19
	£20,000 to £39,999	23%	3.7%	1.21	2.8%	1.44
	£40,000 to £59,999	17%	2.4%	0.78	1.2%	0.62
	£60,000 or more	24%	3.2%	1.02	2.5%	1.28
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	Decile 1 to 3 (most deprived)	27%	4.4%	1.42	2.6%	1.36
	Decile 4 to 7 (middle)	41%	3.3%	1.06	2.1%	1.08
	Decile 8 to 10 (least deprived)	32%	1.8%	0.57	1.2%	0.60
Education level	Low	22%	2.9%	0.94	1.6%	0.83
	Medium	38%	3.1%	1.00	2.3%	1.19
	High	40%	3.2%	1.04	1.8%	0.91
Religion	Christian	29%	3.1%	0.99	2.6%	1.33
	Other faiths	9%	7.0%	2.27	3.5%	1.81
	No faith	55%	1.6%	0.50	0.8%	0.39
Disability status	Yes, limited a lot	13%	3.7%	1.19	2.1%	1.10
	Yes, limited a little	21%	2.4%	0.77	1.6%	0.83
	No	64%	3.3%	1.06	2.0%	1.05
Health conditions	Arthritis	15%	1.0%	0.31	0.9%	0.47
	Asthma	11%	2.9%	0.93	2.0%	1.04
	Cancer	3%	2.6%	0.83	3.0%	1.54
	Chronic Pain	7%	3.4%	1.11	2.0%	1.04
	Diabetes	8%	3.5%	1.13	2.0%	1.02
	Digestive condition	10%	1.9%	0.61	0.8%	0.40
	Hearing impairment	7%	2.3%	0.74	1.3%	0.66
	Heart condition	5%	1.1%	0.37	0.6%	0.28
	High Blood Pressure	15%	1.2%	0.39	0.4%	0.20
	High Cholesterol	12%	1.2%	0.39	0.9%	0.45
	Mental Health condition	15%	2.9%	0.94	1.1%	0.55
	Visual impairment	5%	3.6%	1.16	1.6%	0.82

Category	Group	% of total sample	At any time in the future		In the next three years	
			Percent - high propensity	Index score	Percent -high propensity	Index score
Main news source	A printed copy of a newspaper	3%	0.0%	0.00	-	-
	A newspaper’s website	10%	2.4%	0.77	1.5%	0.75
	A news website not associated with a newspaper	10%	1.4%	0.47	0.5%	0.25
	A news app on a mobile or tablet device	18%	2.7%	0.86	1.8%	0.93
	Social network websites	16%	5.2%	1.69	4.0%	2.05
	Television	24%	2.7%	0.86	1.7%	0.85
	Radio	9%	2.1%	0.66	1.2%	0.64
Charity actions - last 3 months	Regular financial donation	24%	2.8%	0.91	2.7%	1.39
	Ad hoc financial donation	27%	3.5%	1.15	2.1%	1.06
	Bought a product from a charity shop	32%	3.6%	1.16	2.4%	1.21
	Donated something to a charity shop	35%	2.6%	0.85	1.6%	0.81
	Held membership of a charitable organisation	8%	2.4%	0.78	1.1%	0.54
	Volunteered for a charity	10%	4.1%	1.32	2.2%	1.12
	Sponsored someone for a charitable activity	16%	3.4%	1.11	1.7%	0.85
	Participated in a fundraising event	5%	5.0%	1.61	3.1%	1.57
	Donated to a Food Bank	7%	3.9%	1.28	2.1%	1.10
	Campaigning activities	18%	3.0%	0.95	1.3%	0.65
	None of these	24%	2.5%	0.82	1.3%	0.68
	Children and young people	13%	4.4%	1.44	3.7%	1.87
	The community	8%	4.3%	1.38	3.6%	1.87
	Disability	6%	5.3%	1.70	3.4%	1.75
Causes supported	The environment / conservation	8%	3.8%	1.21	2.8%	1.45
	Health and medicine	16%	2.6%	0.83	1.6%	0.82
	Poverty Relief / International Development	8%	6.7%	2.15	5.1%	2.63
	Disaster Relief	5%	4.1%	1.33	2.6%	1.32
	Social care and welfare	5%	6.0%	1.95	3.9%	1.98
	Animals	13%	1.8%	0.57	0.6%	0.32
	Faith-based	4%	2.3%	0.74	1.8%	0.90
	Housing and homelessness	4%	4.5%	1.45	3.9%	1.98
	Military	4%	3.2%	1.02	1.5%	0.76
Volunteered in last 12 months	Yes	10%	4.1%	1.32	2.2%	1.12
	No	90%	3.0%	0.96	1.9%	0.99

Category	Group	% of total sample	At any time in the future		In the next three years	
			Percent - high propensity	Index score	Percent - high propensity	Index score
Housing tenure	Own (outright or with mortgage)	57%	1.4%	0.45	1.1%	0.55
	Rent (private, council or housing associatin)	25%	5.5%	1.78	3.9%	1.98
	Neither – I live with parents, family or friends but pay some rent to them	5%	3.6%	1.15	1.0%	0.51
	Neither – I live rent-free with parents, family or friends	8%	5.6%	1.80	1.9%	0.98
	Other	1%	3.0%	0.98	1.3%	0.66
Marital/ relationship status	Divorced	7%	1.8%	0.58	1.1%	0.55
	In a civil partnership	2%	3.7%	1.19	0.6%	0.28
	In a relationship, but not living together	6%	2.6%	0.83	1.1%	0.54
	Living with a partner but neither married nor in a civil partnership	11%	2.6%	0.83	1.0%	0.54
	Married	41%	2.6%	0.85	1.9%	0.97
	Separated but still legally married or in a civil partnership	1%	2.1%	0.67	2.1%	1.05
	Single	25%	4.6%	1.48	2.9%	1.49
Parent/ guardian status	Widowed	3%	1.2%	0.40	0.3%	0.16
	Not parent/ guardian (any age)	48%	3.2%	1.04	1.8%	0.93
	Parent/ guardian: 18 years and under	21%	6.4%	2.06	4.3%	2.21
	Parent/ guardian: over 18 years	33%	1.0%	0.32	0.7%	0.34

Advancing professional practice

CoramBAAF is the national membership organisation for professionals in fostering, adoption and kinship. Best practice guides on recruitment can be found at corambaaf.org.uk.



“Before being in foster care, my voice was a whisper lost in the storm – a flicker swallowed by the dark. By thirteen, I’d learned to shrink, to hold myself into the corners of rooms where neglect made a home. Words piled up inside me like unread letters, sealed with the fear that no one would care to open them.

Then came the anchor: foster care. Not a fairy tale rescue but a slow unfurl. My new family didn’t just hear me; they cared, eyes bright with ‘Talk to us, we are here for you, always.’”

Anchored in My Truth by Siân, age 16 in the Coram Voices writing awards 2025.



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