

A photograph of two women and a baby. The woman on the left has long, wavy red hair and is wearing a plaid shirt. The woman on the right has dark hair with a red bun and is wearing a light blue t-shirt and denim overalls. They are both smiling and looking at a baby who is being held between them. The baby is wearing a white shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

LGBTQ+ Foster Carers

With you every step of the way

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0800 040 7675
your fostering advice service

www.fosterline.info



If you are lesbian, gay, bi or transgender, you may be wondering if fostering is something you can do. Well, the answer to this question is yes, you can!

Subject to all the usual checks and processes, described elsewhere on this website, there is absolutely no reason why someone from the LGBT community cannot foster.

Lesbian and Gay people have been fostering and adopting children for many years and while it is true that you may occasionally face prejudice from some quarters, there are many examples of children growing up happily with LGBT foster carers.

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Rolfe Pearce from Staffordshire and his partner Alan Wood were presented with the Foster Carers of Distinction Award at the FosterTalk Foster Carer Awards last October.

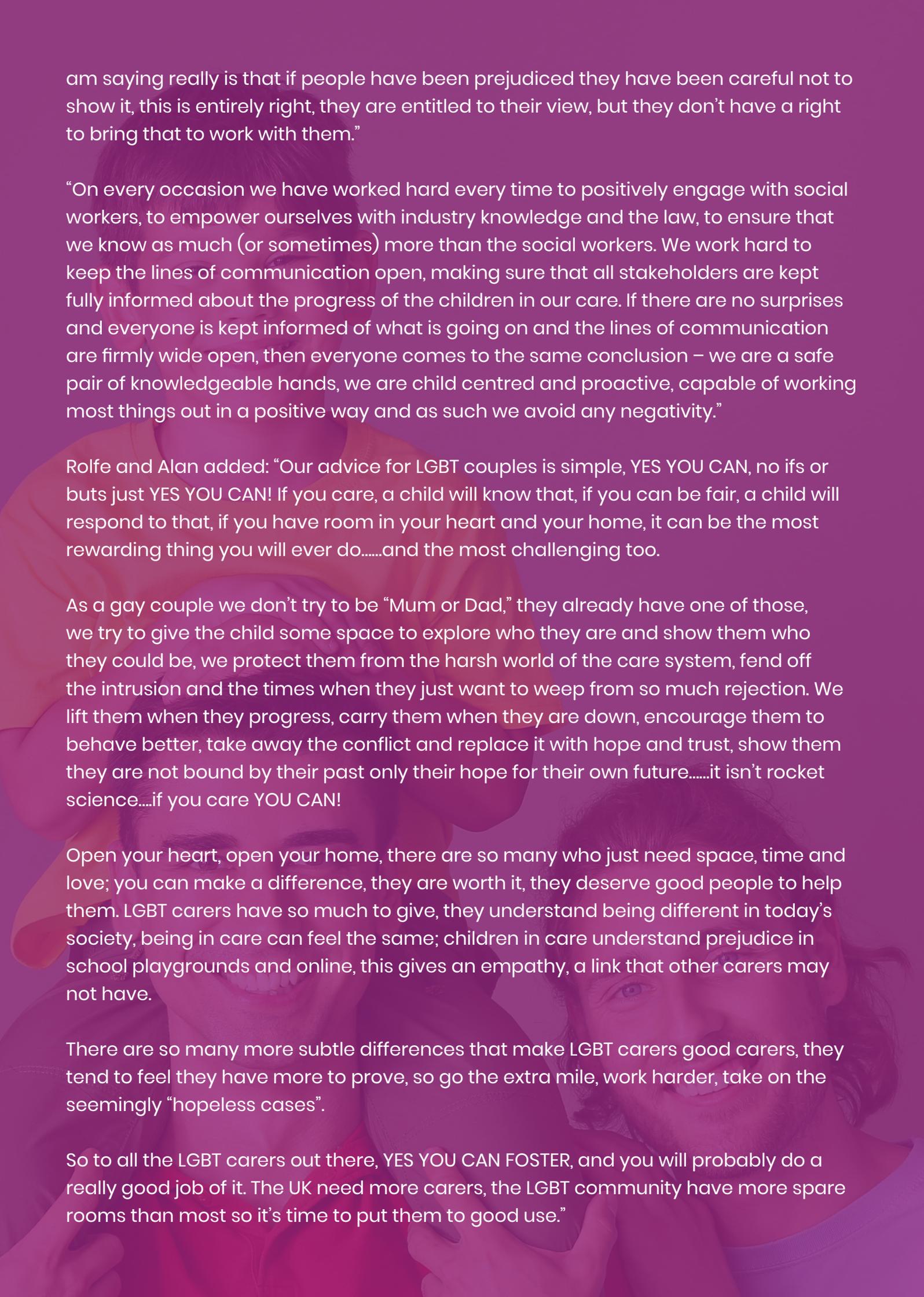
We asked Rolfe to share his thoughts with us on being a foster carer.

Rolfe said, “The award we received confirmed that it doesn’t matter who you are as long as you can offer a space in your home to help vulnerable children. We didn’t think that a same sex couple would be able to foster but you can. We have cared for three long term placements so far and we love what we do. We hope that this award will encourage more same sex couples to come forward as foster carers. You don’t need parental experience; you just need patience, understanding and love to make room in your life to care for a young person.”

Commenting on whether he had encountered any prejudice, Rolfe responded:

“The world of fostering comes from a cross section of general society, so you will always encounter a certain amount of prejudice as you would in general society. We work hard to avoid this by ensuring we proactively engage with all stakeholders BEFORE a placement is agreed. We ensure that the child is asked if they mind being placed with a same sex couple, and would respect their choice if they decide not to come to live with us. Through asking the child we are also asking the social worker at the same time, we have never received any rebuttals from any of the children we have fostered, they have always not been bothered at all.”

He continued: “Social workers come in all shapes and sizes and all spectrums of opinion, and initially treat our want to foster with suspicion. This never really causes any problems, because we make it our job to get the social worker on side and to see that we are completely child centred in our approach and will advocate strongly to get the children in our care the very best the fostering system has to offer. So what I



am saying really is that if people have been prejudiced they have been careful not to show it, this is entirely right, they are entitled to their view, but they don't have a right to bring that to work with them."

"On every occasion we have worked hard every time to positively engage with social workers, to empower ourselves with industry knowledge and the law, to ensure that we know as much (or sometimes) more than the social workers. We work hard to keep the lines of communication open, making sure that all stakeholders are kept fully informed about the progress of the children in our care. If there are no surprises and everyone is kept informed of what is going on and the lines of communication are firmly wide open, then everyone comes to the same conclusion – we are a safe pair of knowledgeable hands, we are child centred and proactive, capable of working most things out in a positive way and as such we avoid any negativity."

Rolfe and Alan added: "Our advice for LGBT couples is simple, YES YOU CAN, no ifs or buts just YES YOU CAN! If you care, a child will know that, if you can be fair, a child will respond to that, if you have room in your heart and your home, it can be the most rewarding thing you will ever do.....and the most challenging too.

As a gay couple we don't try to be "Mum or Dad," they already have one of those, we try to give the child some space to explore who they are and show them who they could be, we protect them from the harsh world of the care system, fend off the intrusion and the times when they just want to weep from so much rejection. We lift them when they progress, carry them when they are down, encourage them to behave better, take away the conflict and replace it with hope and trust, show them they are not bound by their past only their hope for their own future.....it isn't rocket science....if you care YOU CAN!

Open your heart, open your home, there are so many who just need space, time and love; you can make a difference, they are worth it, they deserve good people to help them. LGBT carers have so much to give, they understand being different in today's society, being in care can feel the same; children in care understand prejudice in school playgrounds and online, this gives an empathy, a link that other carers may not have.

There are so many more subtle differences that make LGBT carers good carers, they tend to feel they have more to prove, so go the extra mile, work harder, take on the seemingly "hopeless cases".

So to all the LGBT carers out there, YES YOU CAN FOSTER, and you will probably do a really good job of it. The UK need more carers, the LGBT community have more spare rooms than most so it's time to put them to good use."

What research says:

In 2010, The Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge conducted interviews for Stonewall with 82 children and young people who have lesbian, gay or bisexual parents to learn more about their experiences both at home and at school. The study found that:

- Very young children with gay parents tend not to see their families as being any different to those of their peers.
- Many of the older children said they saw their families as special and different, but only because all families are special and different – though some felt that their families were a lot closer than other people's families.
- Children with gay parents like having gay parents and would not want things to change, but that sometimes they wish that other people were more accepting.

In 2013, research carried out for the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) by Cambridge University into adoptive families headed by same-sex couples painted a positive picture of relationships and well-being in these new families. The study suggests that families with gay fathers might be faring particularly well.

In-depth research into the experiences of adoptive families headed by same-sex couples suggests that children adopted by gay or lesbian couples are just as likely to thrive as those adopted by heterosexual couples. It also reveals that new families cope just as well as traditional families with the big challenges that come with taking on children who have had a poor start in life.

Support for LGBT foster carers

There are a number of organisations offering support to foster carers from the LGBT community including Fosterline, Stonewall, CoramBAAF Adoption & Fostering Academy and New Family Social.

New Family Social is a self-help membership organisation formed in 2007, out of a need for LGBT adopters and foster carers to support each other, and to give children the confidence of knowing other families like theirs.

NFS provides a safe social network for LGBT families along with lots of advice and support. If you are interested in pursuing a career as a foster carer, visit their website for in depth information about what is involved and what support is available to you.

Visit New Family Social at newfamilysocial.org.uk



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