

Betty Gray, a 59 year old tenant in Parson Cross who has been a foster carer for the past 34 years, is appealing for more tenants to become foster carers.

Betty has fostered hundreds of children, from toddler to teenagers, and is currently looking after two girls. She still keeps in close touch with the first child she fostered back in 1982 who is now 37, and regularly helps look after her 3 children who she fondly calls her "grandchildren".

Betty said: "If you're thinking about fostering I'd say just go for it, because despite the challenges it's so rewarding and I'm proud to do it, especially when I think about all the children I've helped over the years. Many of them keep in touch, which is lovely.

"I want to show people that anyone can foster – whatever their background, age or experience. It doesn't matter if you are a council tenant like me and don't own your own home, it's never been a problem for me. The most important thing is that you are willing to open your heart and home to children and young people and show them the love and guidance they need."

"I've always found fostering rewarding and I've enjoyed the challenge of helping children grow more confident and happy. Fostering is about getting to know the child and what they need, being reassuring, showing lots of love and respect and spending the time with them they need.

Most people can be a foster carer, whether they are single, divorced, widowed, retired, unemployed or working. They can rent or own their own home, be from any ethnic and cultural background and be gay, straight, or bisexual.

We always need more foster carers here in Sheffield, and particularly need homes for older children and teenagers.

Being a foster carer is a professional vocation with lots of benefits, including generous allowances so people can really invest in building a loving family life for a vulnerable child.