

Hello,

FOSTERING NEWSLETTER



Welcome to January's Thinking about Fostering? Newsletter



For those of you who are new here, I'm Denise, the fostering team manager and I make sure that whether you're at the beginning of your journey or fostering regularly, you are supported and listened to. I work with foster carers, birth children of families who foster, and care leavers.

Whether you're new to the newsletter or if you've been here a while, I hope you had a fantastic Christmas and are feeling refreshed in 2023!

Our newsletter is for the many people who are 'thinking about fostering'. It's a huge decision to make. There are lots of different things to consider including your family, space at home, and what time you have available, just as a start!

At Leicestershire County Council, my team are here to help, advise and support you with information that will help you to decide if, and when, fostering may work for you. We are not here to encourage you to foster, but more to support you to decide if now is the right time for you to progress.

So, we'll be sending out case studies, stories of people's experiences of the application process and subsequently becoming carers along with many other interesting facts straight to your inbox.

Denise

Find out About Fostering

You must have, at some point, even fleetingly, thought about fostering – otherwise, you wouldn't be here! All we're asking is that you find out a little more information to help you make an informed decision. We have lots of [useful resources](#) that can help you with this – not to mention our virtual and in-person ['Find out about Fostering' events](#).

Our events are all relaxed and informal, we're not trying to test you – we just want to give you all the information we can to help you make an informed decision about fostering and if it is the right path for you.

We welcome questions at these events as we want you to get the most out of the time speaking to us. Our lovely team are happy to answer questions, in front of the group or privately – wherever and however you feel most comfortable.

If you're finding yourself ready to start your fostering journey and need help with anything, from finding out more about the process, to the different ways that you can foster to better suit you, our lovely fostering team are available to support you throughout the whole process.

Whilst we are in desperate need of foster carers, we would never ask you to run before you walk. All we are asking is that you take those first steps into finding out more about fostering, and if coming on this journey with us is something you think you'd like to be a part of. So why not attend our first in-person information event of the year?

[Register](#) to join us at **County Hall on Tuesday 31 January**. The event will be between 6.30 pm and 8.30 pm, but please arrive at 6.15 pm to ensure we can start on time.

You can check out where to park and where to meet us by watching our latest [video](#).

We look forward to seeing you!



The Assessment

My name is Emily, and I am the Assessment Team Manager 🙋



I've been practising as a social worker since 2009, and have been a manager for the Fostering and Adoption Assessment Team since 2016. I manage a team of experienced and enthusiastic assessing social workers, whose job it is to assess and approve foster carers for Leicestershire County Council. We are passionate about assessing and preparing carers for the children who need foster care in Leicestershire – this cohort of children can be vulnerable for all sorts of reasons and it's a fantastic job to be part of finding kind, patient and caring people to care for them, whilst they are not with their birth families.

How fostering assessments are completed - both in terms of timescales and the topics which are covered - is a process which is set out in government legislation and statutory guidance. Our team's job is to assess households according to this guidance but to do this in a way which is informative for, and supportive of, our applicants and their families. It will be difficult to explain the assessment process fully in a couple of paragraphs, but I'll try and give you a flavour of what you could expect...

The assessment process is split into two 'stages' – at Leicestershire County Council, these two stages are often undertaken at the same time but they can also sometimes be done one after the other, depending on your situation.

The Stage 1 process refers to the task of sending and receiving written references and checks (which include, for example, a criminal records check, employer references and, where required, school references). You will also be asked to have an adult health assessment with your GP as part of this Stage 1 process.

Stage 2 of the assessment process involves your allocated social worker interviewing you and any other applicant (partner or sometimes close family member), and other family members who live in the home e.g., birth children. The Stage 2 assessment takes between 7 and 9 assessment sessions at your home and by the end of this period, your assessing social worker writes a report about you; this report – after being checked by you – is then presented to Fostering Panel.

After receiving your application form (which formally starts the assessment process), we aim to present your case to Panel and for you to be approved as a foster carer within 5-6 months; the government guidance for assessment timescales is 8 months, and our recent performance data indicates that we achieve approval (after receiving your application form) for most of our applicants in 6 months or under.

The aim of the fostering assessment process is to gather information about you and your life in a timely and efficient way, so that we can make a recommendation as to whether we think you should be approved as a foster carer. I would understand if some of you, when reading this, think that it sounds a daunting task but when you break it down, I think that you wouldn't be surprised to learn about some of the topics we want to talk through with you for the fostering assessment. For example, we want to get to know you, so we ask you to talk about your childhood and your adult life – what experiences have you had and how have they shaped you to be the person you are today? We also ask you questions about your lifestyle and your work, and whether you have the time and resources to foster?

Lots of our applicants feedback that the assessment process feels cathartic, and that it gives them an opportunity to look back on their lives and celebrate their achievements and the challenges they have overcome. The assessment process is also an opportunity for you to learn about fostering and the needs of our children and the training programme for applicants is jointly delivered by workers from different teams within the fostering service.

This was a whistle stop tour of our assessment process! I hope it provides a sense of what you could expect in terms of your fostering assessment and remember, the Recruitment Team would be happy to take questions from anyone wanting to learn more about fostering and to understand what this may mean for them and their family. If you want to learn more about fostering with Leicestershire County Council, and you haven't done so already, attending one of our virtual or face to face 'Find out about Fostering' open evening events would be a good way to find out more!

Wherever you are on your journey of thinking about fostering, I wish you all the best and hope that 2023 may be the year where you take a step forward into exploring fostering more.

Independent Visitors

“My #1 motivation was to make a real difference to a young person who really needs your help.”

- One of our incredible Independent Visitors

If you're not ready to commit to fostering, becoming an Independent Visitor could be your new year's resolution!



Independent Visitors give a few hours each month to visit a young person and take them out to do something fun. You can find out more about Independent Visiting [here](#).

If you are aged 18+, drive and have access to a car, and think you could make a big difference to our children in care, give us a call.

Particularly, we are seeking more male Independent Visitors to be mentors and role models to our young boys in care in Leicestershire. Though we welcome all volunteers so please get in touch!

FosteringLeicestershire.com

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Out of Hours Fostering Service - You heard it here first 🤪

To ensure we can get in touch with those of you who are very busy, we have a couple of out of hour services!

If you'd like to find out a bit more about fostering but can't call the team during the day, you can also give us a call or message on 07923 230 856, every Tuesday between 5 pm and 8 pm.

Plus, starting in February, we'll be doing 'Fostering Saturday's, where the first Saturday of every month, we'll be available for a chat between 10 am and 12 pm!



🎉 Happy New Year! 🎉

The tinsel has been put away for another year, but the number of children in care in Leicestershire is greater than the number of foster carers we have. So, we need people like you to delve a little deeper this year, to see if fostering is something you think you could do.

Whilst we are in desperate need of foster carers, we would never ask you to run before you walk. All we are asking is that you take those first steps into finding out more about fostering, and if coming on this journey with us is something you think you'd like to be a part of.

From all the fostering team at Leicestershire County Council, happy New Year!

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