

FOSTERING FOR LEICESTERSHIRE



**WE
ARE
FAMILY**

**WHY FOSTER WITH
LEICESTERSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL?**

Take a look inside to find out more...

WELCOME!

If you've thought about fostering but never done anything about it, this is your chance to find out more.

Using this booklet you will be able to see the different ways you can foster, discover the benefits of fostering with Leicestershire County Council and reach an informed decision about how fostering can work for you and your family.

What is fostering?

Fostering is looking after somebody else's child in your home, when they are not able to live with their family. This can be for a short period of time or on a permanent, longer term, basis.

We are looking for more foster carers to become part of our fostering community and care for the children and young people who need our help either for a few days, a few months or to see them into independence and adulthood.

There are various types of fostering that will suit people at different stages in their lives. This booklet will refer to most of them, but we would encourage you to get in touch and chat to the team, who can give you all the information you need.

Why do we need foster carers?

The number of children and young people in Leicestershire who need our help has increased over the last few years and continues to grow. We are responsible for all children in care within Leicestershire and are constantly inviting more people to find out about fostering so they can join our fostering community and make a difference to Leicestershire's children in care.

“ We thought about it for ages. The team helped us to decide if it was right for us or not and now we're on our way! ”

Jeff and Sam, Wigston.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOSTERING

Short term fostering

When a child is taken into care in Leicestershire, while plans and decisions are being made about their future they will stay with one of our 'fostering families' in a short-term placement. This could be for a matter of days, weeks or even months.

Long term or 'permanent' fostering

This is fostering 'without having to say goodbye' where a young person will not be returning home and will live as part of your family until they reach adulthood and independence.

Supported lodgings

Supported lodgings providers offer a room as well as support and guidance to a young person in care who is aged 16 years or over who may be developing their independence skills as they move on from being in care.

One2one specialist fostering

These foster carers are usually from professional backgrounds in health and social care. They dedicate their time to providing intensive support and care.

Parallel (Specialist) fostering

This involves fostering a young person for a period of up to 12 weeks, whilst working as part of a multi-disciplinary team. This time is spent helping the young person to strengthen family relationships and support them to return home to their family at the end of the placement.



Respite care

Respite carers support other carers by providing day care or longer term care on a structured and regular basis.

Short breaks

Short breaks carers work closely with the families of disabled children and provide support on a regular basis. Our short break carers must have relevant experience of caring for young people with physical, behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Independent visitors

Independent visitors are volunteers who take part in a fun activity with a child or young person in care. This is usually for a few hours once a month. There is a short assessment and check process to become an independent visitor. Out of pocket expenses will be paid and you will be asked to visit for a few hours each month at a time to suit you and our young person.



Parent and child fostering

This is when a carer looks after a parent and their child – often but not always a young mother and baby. These placements typically last for around 12 weeks, so that the carer can teach essential parenting skills, encourage the parental bond and ensure that the child is safe and cared for.

“Listening to young people whose parents are foster carers was really useful as we were worried how it would affect our son. Taking Connor along meant he felt part of it from the beginning.”

Joe & Simone, Hinckley.



“It was so interesting to hear all about it, especially from the foster carers. It helped us to decide if we wanted to take it further or not.”

Phil and Hannah, Loughborough.

Call us on **0116 305 0505**, and we can talk you through these different types of fostering in more detail.

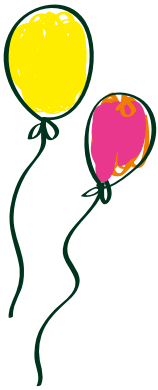
Come to one of our fostering information events, which are held every three weeks at County Hall in Glenfield. Hear from some of our foster carers and meet the fostering team in a relaxed and friendly environment.

For dates of all our events, including pop-ups, visit our website:

www.fosteringleicestershire.com

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Here is a selection of our most commonly asked questions – please get in touch if there's anything else you want to ask us.



Q: Am I the right age?

A: We have carers of all ages ranging from people in their 20s to people in their 70s. The only requirement is that you have the energy to look after a child or young person.

Q: Can I foster if I'm gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?

A: Yes. We welcome applications from couples in same sex relationships or single gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people.

Q: Will I be paid as a foster carer?

A: Yes. You will be paid a generous weekly allowance which varies according to the child's age and number of children you foster. There are also additional payments to cover the costs of birthdays and other events.

Q: Will the child's parents visit my home?

A: No, unless there are exceptional circumstances. In the case where a child has contact with their family members, foster carers will be required to take and collect them from these meetings in a neutral place such as a children's family centre.

Q: Do I have to be married, or in a relationship?

A: No, we welcome people who are married, single, living together or in a civil partnership. It's important that you have good support networks around you in the form of family or friends.

Q: I have a criminal record, can I still foster?

A: You cannot foster if you have certain types of convictions, such as violent crimes or offences against children, but you are welcome to get in touch if you are unsure.



Q: What if I find it too difficult when children I foster need to move on?

A: We can support you to find the right type of fostering to suit you. This sometimes might be for a short space of time and we can prepare for those scenarios through our tailored training. We have specific training to simulate this experience so you feel fully supported when you begin your fostering journey.

Q: How long does it take to become a foster carer?

A: We carry out stage one and stage two of the process together now, which means that you can be through our process in four months. For our carers who are transferring from Independent Fostering Agencies, this time is reduced.



SUPPORT NETWORK

Although our foster carers receive a financial allowance and skills payment, we know that this is just part of what they need. As your local council we are close by and are able to offer a fantastic variety of localised support. We pride ourselves on supporting and empowering our carers – they are a big part of a team that makes a difference to the lives of vulnerable Leicestershire children and young people.

Support includes:

- A dedicated team of social workers to ensure all our foster carers are well supported.
- 24 hour telephone support, available 365 days a year.
- Foster carer locality groups that meet regularly across the county. Here carers can talk to others in confidence, and strengthen support networks within the fostering community.
- A monthly newsletter to keep carers informed about what's happening within the department and the wider world of fostering.
- Ongoing specialist training, with a variety of courses available.
- Befriending scheme, where experienced foster carers offer advice and support to new carers.
- Regular social events for foster carers, their children and the children they are looking after.



Leicestershire County Council is a member of the Fostering Network, which means all our foster carers have automatic membership too. The Fostering Network provides a wide range of information and support.



We are also proud members of New Family Social, an organisation which offers support and guidance to foster carers and adopters from the LGBT community. This entitles our foster carers to free membership too.



We encourage applications from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) carers. We're a Stonewall diversity champion and have been in the top 20 gay-friendly employer's list since 2012.



WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT TO AN INDEPENDENT FOSTERING AGENCY?

If you've been thinking about fostering, you may be aware of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). Some of these are based locally, but most are national companies with offices that cover large regional areas. As we only look after Leicestershire's children and young people, you will always be local.

The main difference between a local authority and an IFA is that when children are in care, they are in the care of the local authority. IFAs recruit carers and take them through an assessment process, but are reliant on local authorities to place children with them. In Leicestershire we always look to place children with our own carers first.

Fostering with us can mean more regular placements, plus our large and friendly team is close at hand to offer support, advice and bespoke training.

APPLYING TO FOSTER:

The first step is to find out everything you need to know about fostering, by attending one of our 'find out about fostering' events. Following your enquiry, we can arrange a home visit to see if we are all happy to progress to a full assessment.

Stage one and Stage two are now carried out concurrently meaning that the process is only around four months now.

STAGE ONE

We collect all the information we need from you to carry out all the necessary background and reference checks.

STAGE TWO

A social worker will make a number of visits to your home to find out all about you, so that we will be able to make the right 'match' when you are an approved carer.

During stage two of the assessment, you will be required to attend our 'Skills to Foster' training course, which will teach you everything you need to know in order to become a great foster carer.

After stage two has finished and your social worker is happy that you will make a great carer, your application will be taken to 'panel' for recommendation that you become an approved carer. Lastly, the council's Agency Decision Maker will rubber-stamp the recommendation and you will officially become a registered foster carer.



TAKE THE NEXT STEP!

Get in touch directly with the fostering team for a friendly and informal chat.

Call: **0116 305 05 05**

Email: **fostering@leics.gov.uk**

Website: **www.fosteringleicestershire.com**

Make a difference by fostering for Leicestershire

**Make a difference to the
lives of Leicestershire's
children and young
people in care.**



Fostering[Leicestershire.com](https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/fostering)
0116 305 0505

 **Leicestershire
County Council**