



**COULD YOU  
SUPPORT A CHILD  
WHEN THEY NEED  
IT THE MOST?**

*Foster with us and  
make a difference*



**west  
sussex  
county  
council**

**FOSTERING**  
*support • believe • love • inspire*

## What is Fostering?

Fostering is temporarily, or sometimes permanently, caring for children or young people in your own home while their own parents are unable to look after them.

Children come into care for a number of reasons. It can be due to a parent's ill health, problems within the family, or because a child has been neglected or abused. For some young people who have a disability, foster carers can share their care with their birth parents.

Our foster carers look after most children who come into care in West Sussex. They make an incredible difference to these children, providing them with a positive, safe supportive environment and helping them through a difficult period of the lives.

## Who can foster?

Foster carers come from all walks of life, which are as varied as those of the children they care for. We welcome applications from people who are single, in a relationship, of any sexual orientation and from all religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. What you do need to have is patience, resilience, time and energy – and a genuine desire to help children develop.

You can be almost any age, provided you have sufficient maturity and life experience, including some child care experience, and are in reasonable health. You would also need to provide a foster child with a bedroom of their own.

Children in foster care tell us they need firm boundaries, someone who will listen to them and support them with any problems. Could that person be you?



*“To provide a safe, secure and loving home for someone who hasn't got that is the most rewarding job you could ever do.”*

**SARAH**



*“Foster children don't want to be different. They just want to be normal and we want to give them that.”*

**ELAINE**



## Types of Fostering

Listed below are the different ways in which you could get involved with fostering.

### Short term fostering

When a child is first looked after by our Children's Services, it is not always clear how long the child will need to be in a foster home. Short-term foster carers work with the child to help them return to their birth family or move on to a long-term arrangement.

### Long term or permanent fostering

Long-term or permanent fostering is when you foster a child who cannot return to their own family, but for whom adoption is not the most appropriate option. This might be because the child continues

to have regular contact with their relatives. Long-term fostering means they will stay with you until they become adults and are ready to live independently.

### Parent and child fostering

Parent and child foster carers provide support to vulnerable parents and their child(ren) to give them the best possible chance to stay together. Parent and child placements typically last for 14 weeks. As a parent and child foster carer you will support, advise and guide the parent in how to care for their child safely.

If you're flexible, tolerant, patient, a good communicator and have plenty of time to provide the specialist support required, then this type of fostering could be for you.

## Short break foster care

Short break foster care involves caring for a child with disabilities at regular intervals, for perhaps one or two nights a week or one weekend per month. It gives children planned periods of care away from their families.

Short breaks help children to spend time away from their birth families and develop their independence. It can also help to broaden their horizons and help them integrate with other children, gain confidence and have fun.

Short break foster carers might care for

- children who have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- children with physical disabilities that require care in a home with adaptations
- children whose behaviour can challenge
- children with complex medical needs

## Respite foster care

Respite is when you care for a child for short periods of time on a planned and regular basis. This allows the child's birth parents or regular foster carers to have a break themselves, and supports them in caring for the child longer term.

## Supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children

When children find themselves alone in the UK they are taken into the care of the local authority.

They could be here because they have:

- been trafficked
- been separated from family on arrival due to an immigration issue
- fled their homeland due to war or fear of persecution.

Foster carers give unaccompanied, asylum-seeking children a safe place to live while their individual case is considered.

The foster carer will be asked to accompany them to immigration meetings and arrange legal support. As well as this they will need to help the young person to access education, make links with local cultural and faith groups and support them in day-to-day living, including helping them to learn the English language.

There are many challenges involved in this type of fostering, however our foster carers tell us that it is also one of the most rewarding.

## Supported Lodgings

Supported lodgings is an accommodation scheme for young people aged between 16 and 21 (or up to 25 if in higher education), who are not yet ready to live on their own.

The aim of the scheme is to offer young people the opportunity to live in the home of an approved person who will help them develop the necessary life skills to prepare them for independent living.

See our separate leaflet for more details.

# Why foster with us?

Our children matter to us, and finding local foster carers is really important.

In West Sussex, we endeavour to find foster carers that live in the communities our children live in so they can continue to attend school and maintain links with their families.

Therefore, if you foster with us, you will be the first choice of foster carer for our children.

Our foster carers benefit from:

- Being part of a fostering service which works to the ground-breaking secure base model
- Support from highly skilled and experienced social workers, with regular one-to-one supervision
- An exciting new training package tailored to your needs - including access to secure base training
- A competitive financial package and access to local leisure discounts
- Out of hours support - so you are never left alone to cope with difficult situations
- Membership of The Fostering Network
- Membership of our foster carers' association - which provides help and days out for local foster carers and their families
- Support groups which run regularly across the county
- Specialist links to therapeutic intervention services
- A counselling service which is there if you need it



## Training

We are committed to developing foster carers' skills and provide a programme of regular training.

Our training department, together with the fostering service, produces a comprehensive range of courses. We will assist with expenses to help you attend training, and we aim to hold courses at times which give everybody the chance to attend.

All foster carers are expected to attend a number of training courses in their first year. As your experience and skills increase, and you complete more training courses, the fostering service will assess whether you qualify for a higher level of payment.

## Financial support

West Sussex pays an allowance to foster carers to cover the cost of caring for a child. This allowance is dependent on the child's age. A 'skills fee' is also paid, which increases with the number of children placed, and with the foster carer's level of training and experience.

The basic allowance covers household expenses such as food, clothing, heating, lighting, nappies, pocket money and dinner money. We also give additional allowances for the child's birthday, Christmas and holidays.

For current foster carer payments please see [www.westsussex.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fostering)



*“Take the first step; make up your mind to enjoy it and the difference you can make to a child’s life.”*

**ELAINE**

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## THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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You make an enquiry to the Fostering team



We will have an initial conversation with you



We will organise an initial visit to you at home



A decision will be made whether to undertake checks  
e.g. CRB, medical checks



Checks will begin



You will attend a three-day Skills to Foster course  
while checks are being carried out



The assessment process will begin (this involves a number of  
home visits allowing us to get to know you and your family).



You will attend Foster Panel, alongside your assessing social worker



A decision is made and ratified by the agency decision maker



You can begin fostering!



## Find out more

If you would like to find out more about fostering, you can do so in a number of ways:

- Visit **[www.westsussex.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fostering)**, where you can read our frequently asked questions, find out more about the fostering process and read real life stories from foster carers.
- Fill in our online contact form at **[www.westsussex.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fostering)** and we'll get in touch for a chat about your skills and, if appropriate, arrange a visit to meet you at home.
- Call the Fostering Recruitment Team on **0330 222 7775** during normal office hours for an informal chat.
- Come and meet us at one of our regular drop-in events. For more details keep your eye on the website, or like us on Facebook - **[www.facebook.com/wscffostering](http://www.facebook.com/wscffostering)**



## READY TO APPLY?

YOU CAN FILL IN OUR CONTACT FORM ONLINE  
AT **[WWW.WESTSUSSEX.GOV.UK/FOSTERING](http://WWW.WESTSUSSEX.GOV.UK/FOSTERING)**  
OR ALTERNATIVELY CALL **0330 222 7775**.