Could you give a local child a family?
If you can provide a child with a loving home, we can provide excellent support and training.
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 arrangements.

**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 placement**

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.

**Fostering Early Support Programme (FESP)**

Fostering Early Support Programme (FESP) is a specialist programme to help families resolve their difficulties and prevent young people remaining in care unnecessarily. The scheme accommodates young people who come into foster care in an emergency because of a crisis in the family. The FESP carer will work closely with the Social Work Team in order to return the young person to their family within three months.

The focus of FESP is children aged 10 to 16 year olds.

**Treatment foster care (Leapfrog)**

Treatment foster care - also known as Leapfrog - is specialist care for children with complex emotional and behavioral difficulties who are aged three to six. These children need structured and highly nurturing families in which to grow and learn.

Our therapeutic team provides foster carers with a high level of training and support, including on-call support.

**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 choose West Sussex?

By choosing to foster through West Sussex County Council, not only will you be providing a local child with a local family, you will also benefit from extensive support and training.

Professional support

We make sure that all our would-be and current foster carers receive excellent support. New applicants are linked with an experienced foster carer who will offer advice throughout the assessment process.

Once you have been approved, you will be allocated a family placement social worker who will support you in your role of caring for children. You will also get to know other members of their team and other local foster carers through regular support groups.

West Sussex foster carers also have access to a Foster Carer’s Association (UFCA), to which all approved carers are enrolled. As well as providing a free helpline for advice and support, the Association also organises regular events for children and helps the Fostering Service with new developments and staff appointments.

“By fostering through West Sussex County Council we’re really well supported – you always have someone to talk to.”

Frances
**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

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

Elaine
THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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
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, where you can read our frequently asked questions, find out more about the fostering process and read real life stories from foster carers.

• 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/wscfcfostering

• Text ‘FOSTER’ to 82228 (standard rates apply) and a member of the Fostering Recruitment Team will call you back

Ready to apply?

You can fill in our application form online at www.westsussex.gov.uk/fostering or alternatively call 0330 222 7775 to receive an application pack.