

# COULD YOU FOSTER?

FOSTER CHILDREN AND FOSTER CARERS COME FROM WIDE AND DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS. FOSTERING IS ABOUT BEING ABLE TO LOOK AFTER A CHILD WHO IS NOT YOUR OWN TO HELP THEM THRIVE. WE WELCOME ENQUIRES FROM PEOPLE FROM ANY MARITAL STATUS, SEXUALITY, RACE, RELIGION, AND GENDER, WHO CAN PROVIDE A CHILD WITH A LOVING, SAFE, AND CARING HOME



For us to ensure that the children and young people are safe and secure, it is very important that our foster carers meet several requirements.

## Do you meet the requirements to become a Foster Carer?

- We don't ask for qualifications to become a foster carer - your life experiences, and the skills and the qualities you have developed because of these, are what matter. We'll work with you to identify transferable skills and offer training and support.
- There is no upper age limit (minimum age 21) and if you're fit and healthy and can meet the needs of our children, you can apply.
- You must have a spare bedroom at the time of enquiry. You don't have to own your own home but do need to have a secure tenancy and the homeowner's agreement.
- There are some offences, such as crimes against children, which mean that you will not be able to foster. Other minor offences may not affect your application. You will need to disclose any convictions during the assessment process

To assess your skills to foster, it is vital you are honest and open. The assessment process is thorough, and you'll be asked about many different aspects of your life.



# MEET SOME OF OUR CARERS

## Lynn and Simon

**Age:** 58 & 50

**Lives:** Redditch

**Experience:** Before becoming foster carers, Lynn was a children's nurse. Simon continues to work in higher education. Lynn and Simon have been approved as foster carers for Worcestershire Children First Fostering (WCFF) for just over a year and have been fostering two children.

**Why did you decide to foster?** We always wanted to foster and waited until our own three children were almost independent. Having fostered now for 12 months we wish we had done this years ago and the foster children could have grown up with our children. Most of the time our foster children have the same needs of any child, for example the need for attention, time, affection, and structure. It's the experiences they have been through of not always having consistent and reliable adults around them that means this aspect is important for us as carers to get right.

**Why foster with Worcestershire Children First Fostering?** For Lynn, as she was a nurse, it was important to work with local government and her perception was Worcestershire Children First Fostering would prioritise the children and have no other agenda. It's about the child, not business, and our experiences and levels of support have proved Worcestershire Children First Fostering is a professional organisation.

## Andy and Janice

**Age:** 68 & 66

**Lives:** Redditch

**Experience:** Andy and Janice first started fostering in 1986 when they lived in Cumbria. Their own children were 6 & 9 years old. They were approved for teenagers, to have an age gap between their children and foster children. They had a short break from fostering when they moved to Redditch in 1988 and were approved as foster carers for us in 1990, so have been fostering for 34+ years.

**Why did you decide to foster?** Andy says Janice is a very loving, non-judgemental parent. She is also pragmatic, which contrasts very well with my tendency to 'dream' and play. We both come from large families and as parents, it was Janice who wanted to start fostering.

**Why foster with Worcestershire Children First Fostering?** If we were being asked to describe our fostering career to-date, we would say it has been interesting, rewarding, challenging and has taught us so much about life, expectations, ourselves as individuals and that children will never fail to surprise, irrespective of how difficult life has been for them. Another wonderful by-product of fostering is how these children impact the lives of the wider family in so many positive ways, not least the depth of resilience they display. For sure fostering won't be for everyone, but for those people who are prepared to be patient, learn new skills, and can offer consistency and a loving, nurturing environment the rewards can be significant. With Worcestershire Children First Fostering we have always had the support, training, and close working relationships with social workers, and we feel valued.

# MEET SOME OF OUR CARERS

## Sarah

**Age:** 48

**Lives:** Redditch

**Experience:** Being a Mum. Sarah has been fostering for Worcestershire Children First Fostering for 5 years and has looked after three children in that time. The current child is living with her through a long-term fostering arrangement.

**Why did you decide to foster?** I had a friend who fostered. I wish I had known before how much immediate support you get from Worcestershire Children First Fostering, support is available through the fostering approval process. I would not have doubted myself or worried. It's fulfilling, the difference you can make, when the sad child smiles and their eyes shine with confidence.

**Why foster with Worcestershire Children First Fostering?** Positive word of mouth recommendation about the support and training. I have found the fostering social workers are always reachable or get back to you as soon as they can. You feel part of the team and can be a voice and an advocate for the child, it makes me feel proud.

## James

**Age:** 35

**Lives:** Malvern

**Experience:** James is a teaching assistant at a special needs school.

**Why did you decide to foster?** Supporting children with additional needs has been my passion and I get a lot of personal reward from knowing that I have helped a child to thrive and reach their full potential. I decided that I could support a child in my home and not just in a school setting.

**Why foster with Worcestershire Children First Fostering?** I work term time so full-time fostering is not something that I can do at this time. Worcestershire Children First Fostering Buddy Foster Care gives me the opportunity of supporting a child who lives full time with his main foster carer who is a single carer and needs regular breaks. The child I support has disabilities and this gives me the chance to use my experience and skills. I work closely with the child's main foster carer and the professional supports, for example social worker and school. The time the child comes to stay with me helps his foster carer have a rest and this is supporting that fostering arrangement to keep going. By coming regularly to me some weekends and school holidays this means the child benefits from not having to stay with lots of different carers and we can both really get to know each other.

# FOSTERING IN WORCESTERSHIRE



THE BEST PART OF BEING A FOSTER CARER IS KNOWING THAT YOU ARE MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON'S LIFE, HELPING THEM BUILD A BETTER FUTURE, BY PROVIDING CARE AND SUPPORT AT A TIME THEY NEED IT MOST.

Caring for looked after children and young people, whilst presenting unique challenges, can be hugely rewarding. You will need to have qualities to see a child or young person through the ups and downs that they are facing. Children and young people need to be fostered for many reasons and for different lengths of time. If you are able to offer time, love, patience, a willingness to work with those people who are important to the child or young person and a desire to understand how your child or young person sees the world, then the rewards will be limitless.

Lots of people are able to foster and we are interested in your skills and capacity to parent, not your status. We are looking for a wide range of people to become foster carers; single, married, same sex couples, with or without children, working or not. If you can offer your commitment and support to a child or young person who needs to be looked after, we know you've got the potential to become a foster carer.

The assessment process focuses on finding the best possible foster carers for the child and approval as a foster carer takes about six months. It's less daunting than you might think and could be one of the most rewarding decisions you'll ever make.

**"YOU'RE GIVING YOUR LIFE TO A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON. IT'S THE BEST THING I'VE EVER DONE."**

Claire - foster carer



# THE FOSTERING JOURNEY

FROM THE MOMENT YOU FIRST CONSIDER BECOMING A FOSTER CARER YOU ARE ON A JOURNEY TO DISCOVER IF FOSTERING IS RIGHT FOR YOU, AND WHAT KIND OF CARER YOU MIGHT BE.



That journey is made together with the social workers from Worcestershire Children First Fostering. Their job is to work with you and make sure that you understand the needs of children who are looked after and that you have or can acquire the skills and knowledge to meet their needs.

The assessment of a person's suitability to foster consists of two stages. To ensure that the process is smooth and efficient, in most instances we run the stages in parallel. Once your initial enquiry is processed, we aim to complete the assessment within four months. This allows time for people to consider carefully whether embarking on this journey is right for them.

We know that people may have been thinking about fostering for some time before feeling ready to begin their journey. We hope that this pack helps you to decide if you can make a positive change to the life of a child or young person.

## ALREADY A FOSTER CARER?

See page 16 of this document for more information on transferring to Worcestershire Children First

**“ TO BE A GOOD FOSTER CARER YOU NEED PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE ”**

Anon - foster carer

**1**

### Pre Assessment - Registering your interest

You can register your interest in fostering via our website, email or telephone. An information pack will be emailed to you. Once you have read the information pack and considered all the information, you can contact our Recruitment Support Officer to have an 'initial enquiry' taken. This will then be passed to a social worker who will call you to arrange the Initial Home Visit. If you have any questions, we will be able to answer them for you.

**2**

### Pre Assessment - Initial Home Visit & Preparation Training Course

After the initial enquiry has been completed, a social worker will contact you to arrange to visit you (and your partner if relevant) in your own home. This will provide the opportunity to further explore your personal circumstances in privacy and to talk about the role of fostering.

If both you and the social worker agree that fostering could be right for you, you will then be invited to attend a preparation training course. We hold these monthly, alternating weekday, evening and weekend courses.

Once you have attended the Preparation Course and managers believe you might be suitable, a formal application form will be emailed or posted to you at this stage to complete and return.

**3**

### Assessment Stage One - Registration and Checks

Once you submit your formal application form, Stage One can begin.

We will take up a number of statutory checks and references with your consent, including, for example:

- Disclosure and Barring Service which is a criminal background check
- Personal references, from family members and non-family members
- Employers' references

We will request your agreement to undertake a fostering medical, which is completed by your GP. This is simply to ensure that you are medically fit enough to cope with the challenges of fostering.

Your application can, however, be stopped at any point during Stage One, should the statutory checks reveal information that we consider would make you unsuitable to foster.

**4**

### Assessment Stage Two - Assessment

Your social worker will meet with you throughout this period. During this time the social worker gets to know you and your family and spends time helping you think about what strengths you could bring to caring for a looked after child or young person. We will talk to you about your family background and your present circumstances. You will be asked to provide information about your education, employment history and leisure interests, past relationships, and experience of caring for children. Remember, the whole process is focused on finding the right homes for the children and young people who need to be looked after, so developing an understanding of the kinds of children and young people you could support is very important.

The process of preparation and assessment of prospective foster carers is thorough. This is to determine whether applicants are suitable to foster. During this stage we will have to ask some very detailed and personal questions, so we ask you to be as relaxed, open, and honest with us as possible.



5

### Fostering Panel

On completion of the assessment, it is written up into a report called the Prospective Foster Carers' Report (Form F), which is taken to Worcestershire Children First Fosterings Foster Panel. You will have the opportunity to read and comment upon the report.

You will be invited to attend the panel meeting with your social worker. All panel members will have read your assessment and will have some questions to ask you. You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions that you may have.

The panel will make a recommendation regarding your approval. This will be passed to a senior manager, who decides whether or not to accept the recommendation based on all of the reports and minutes of the panel meeting.



6

### Following Approval

Following approval, you will be asked to sign the Foster Carer Agreement. This sets out what you can expect from the Fostering Service in supervising and supporting you, and our expectations of you and how we work together.

You are then ready to foster. The Fostering Service will look at matching you with a child and young person depending on your type of approval, the needs of the child and young person and your particular strengths.



## What if your application is not successful?

During the early stage of the process: Occasionally applicants will be advised that the Fostering Service believes they are unlikely to be recommended as suitable to foster a child or young person. If this is the case, we will provide you with a clear written explanation of the reasons why you are unable to complete Stage Two. An applicant cannot appeal this decision. However, if you are unhappy with the way your application has been handled, representation can be made through the complaints process. The complaints process cannot, however, consider whether you are suitable to foster or not.

Following attendance at Fostering Panel: Should you not agree with the decision of the Agency, you have the opportunity to appeal and have your case reviewed either by the Fostering Service or by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). This is operated by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (CoramBAAF), on behalf of the Department for Education. Whilst it cannot overturn the Agency's decision, it can make a recommendation to the Agency on your suitability to be approved as a foster carer. The Agency will take that recommendation into consideration when making its final decision.

# WHO ARE THE CHILDREN?

ALL OUR CHILDREN ARE SPECIAL AND COME FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS WITH DIFFERENT LIFE EXPERIENCES. WE NEED FOSTER CARERS WITH A RANGE OF EXPERIENCE WHO ARE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE ETHNIC AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS OF OUR CHILDREN.



## Parent and Child – Sophie (21) and Beth (new-born)

Sophie, age 21, had experienced a difficult childhood and struggled to manage many areas of her life including safe relationships, budgeting, and managing her own accommodation. Sophie was referred to children's services when she became pregnant as she was not keeping appointments with the midwife who was concerned Sophie wasn't looking after herself during the pregnancy and had poor awareness of the expectations of becoming a mum and she had no safe family member who could support her when baby was born. It was agreed by the Family Court that Sophie should be supported to care for her baby through a parent and child fostering arrangement.

Sophie's baby was born in hospital, a healthy little girl who she named Beth. Sophie and Beth moved from hospital to a parent and child fostering arrangement. Sophie was feeling anxious about going into a parent and child foster home. The foster carer welcomed Sophie and made her feel relaxed, explaining that it was the foster carer's role to act as an experienced parental figure to help guide Sophie to become a better parent. Sophie was supported and guided to undertake all the basic care tasks for her daughter which included meeting the baby's physical and emotional needs, for example, teaching Sophie how to get her baby into a good routine, feeding, bathing, changing and bonding. All of this was under the close supervision and guidance of the foster carer who was at the same time working with the child's social work team to help inform an assessment of Sophie's capacity to take on this role herself and keep her baby safe so that they could move on and live



# WHO ARE THE CHILDREN?

independently, with support, in the community. This also meant working alongside professionals in the Family Court process and working with Sophie to help her understand the risks her baby's father posed to Beth and Sophie because of his history of domestic violence. Working in partnership with the foster carer Sophie was able to learn about meeting Beth's needs and eventually she moved out with Beth to live in the community, with Children's Service support, and was grateful to her foster carer who helped her achieve this.

## **Sibling group of 3 – Jodie (5) Bailey (4) and Ruby (2)**

Before coming into foster care, Jodie, Bailey, and Ruby had lived at home with their parents and 4 older siblings. They had been on a child protection plan because of concern about neglect and despite support being given to parents in the community, the parents could not demonstrate they could look after the children properly and the home conditions had deteriorated significantly, the children were living in an extremely dirty home, not being given enough food, missed health appointments for example immunisations and dentist. The children had low school attendance. Their older brothers and sisters went to live with other foster carers.

*“When we came to live with our foster carers, we were given regular meals and we had a bedtime routine – we had a bath, a story, and then slept in a clean and comfortable bed. Our carers took us to school and nursery, we had fun times, when we needed to go to the dentist and the doctor we were taken. We still wanted to see our mum and dad and other important people in our family and our foster carers took us to see them and our 2 sisters and 2 brothers who were living with other foster carers. We were not able to live with mum and dad again as they couldn't show the Family Court that they could keep us safe. Our foster carers supported us to meet a new foster family who became our long-term foster carers. We still see our mum and dad, brothers, and sisters.”*



# WHO ARE THE CHILDREN?



## Teenager - Michael

Michael came into foster care aged 15, he had been living with his mum who had poor mental health which had stopped her being able to provide good enough parenting to him. Most of the time he was having to take care of himself. Michael was not attending school and his relationship with his mum had deteriorated, there were lots of rows and some of these became physical. Michael initially went to stay with a foster carer for respite but when he returned home, things did not change, and he and his mum fell back into their old pattern and routine. Michael had no safe family members to care for him, his dad was absent, maternal grandparents were in poor health which prevented them from being able to support him.

*"I went to live with my foster carer who supported me to get back into school. She supported me with homework, gave me a home where I knew that someone was looking after me, like making me meals, having clean clothes, and keeping in touch with my mum, and friends. My social worker helped me and my mum to get along better, the social worker helped my mum to get help for her moods. I was told that my mum would not get well enough to look after me again and I stayed with my foster carer. My foster carer helped me understand that she was looking after me and someone was looking after my mum. My foster carer helped me to become more independent, learning how to budget and how to cook, she helped me to make a decision about my future career and helped me get into college where I am training to be an electrician. My foster carer helped me to manage my emotions. At 18, I was able to stay living with her on 'Staying Put' arrangement. I am very happy I can continue living with her and she continues to support me."*

# TYPES OF FOSTERING

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A TYPICAL FOSTERING SITUATION. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME 'LOOKED AFTER' FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS AND, ALTHOUGH MANY OF THEM RETURN HOME AFTER A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, SOME REMAIN 'LOOKED AFTER' FOR ANYTHING FROM A FEW WEEKS TO SEVERAL YEARS.



If you decide to progress through the approval process to become a foster carer, you will have plenty of opportunity to explore which type of fostering would be right for you and your family.

## Short Term Fostering

Some children need to be cared for away from their home for a short period of time. This could be because their family is experiencing a crisis and has requested that their child is looked after for a short time while they sort out their difficulties. Alternatively, children may have experienced some form of abuse, trauma or neglect which has resulted in them being placed elsewhere for their own safety.

Short term fostering can be for a period of days, weeks or sometimes months. Sometimes decisions about the child's future cannot be made quickly and placements can last a year or longer. Generally, most children return to the care of their family unless it is unsafe for them to do so. In some situations, children and young people are not able to return to their birth family, and the decision taken is to look for a permanent, adoptive, or long-term foster home. It is likely that foster carers will look after the child and help them think about what the future holds whilst a new, permanent family is found for them.



# TYPES OF FOSTERING

## Long Term Fostering

If a child is unable to return to the care of their birth family, but adoption is not appropriate for that child, long term foster carers may need to be found to care for them. As the title suggests, these foster carers will normally care for these children through to independence.

Long term fostering allows children and young people to live with a family where they can feel secure and experience a stable family environment, while maintaining contact with their birth family where that's right for them.

## Respite Fostering

Respite foster care is time limited. A respite foster carer could care for a child for a week or two at a time, for example during school holidays, or at weekends. The child could be the same child on a regular basis. Foster carers who offer respite fostering may look after children who are already cared for on a full-time basis by other foster carers or a child or young person who is living at home. This respite period can benefit both the foster carer and the child.

## Parent and Child Placements

Parents, who are unable to meet the child's most basic needs and protect them, will sometimes need somewhere to live where they can be supported in looking after their baby or young child. This type of foster placement can help a family to stay together and is, therefore, highly valued. The foster carer would be asked to give practical and emotional support to help the parent to develop the skills required to meet their own and their child's needs. This will form part of an assessment period that is usually limited to a few months.

# TYPES OF FOSTERING

## Buddy support carer

Buddy Fostering is a new scheme launched by Worcestershire Children First Fostering to promote consistent respite care to our existing fostering families and looked after children.

Buddy Foster Carers will offer children and young people the opportunity to live with them for short but regular periods of time giving them a positive, consistent, stable and safe place to have time out from their interim usual foster care or internal residential care provision.

It is a priority for us that the experience of the child and young person is a relationship based positive one and therefore, in addition to the episodes of care, the Buddy Foster Carers and the young person will have an agreed arrangement for occasional virtual contact to maintain that relationship between stays.

This care arrangement will also provide our foster carers with the support that they need to provide committed, positive, and resilient care to those children and young people who have been placed with them on a temporary basis. This will prevent breakdown of foster placements and in the cases of those children from a residential setting it will give them the opportunity to have a family care experience.

Buddy Foster Carers may be interested in fostering but are not able to do this full time, for example they may work. The minimum availability of a Buddy Foster Carer will be 12 weekends a year and one-week holiday. In exceptional cases there may be an additional need for an emergency short break with the Buddy Foster Carer.

As a Buddy Foster Carer you will:

- Undertake the Foster Carer assessment and mandatory training programme. You will be valued and supported by our fostering services and you will receive opportunities for non-mandatory training, receive regular support visits and an annual review to see how things have worked for you and the young people you have cared for.
- Have an agreed calendar of dates and times for the young person stays and contact so that you can manage your time well in advance.
- Need to have a dedicated sleeping space for the young person.
- You will not be working during the times you are acting as carer so that the child can really experience your care, time, and attention.
- You may or may not have children of your own but you will have a love of children and a commitment to helping them be happy healthy and safe.
- You will live in Worcestershire.
- You will be paid for the time you are caring for the young person and the training session you attend.

# BUT WHAT ABOUT...?

Frequently asked questions about fostering

## Who can become a carer?

We are looking for a range of families to join our family of experienced foster carers. We want to make sure that every child who needs to be placed is suitably matched with a family which can meet the child's individual needs. It is important for us to recruit foster carers who have a variety and breadth of knowledge, skills and experience, which will help them to meet the children's complex needs.

## Do I have to have a spare room?

Yes, children in foster care must have their own room – they cannot share with your birth children. Although your children may be happy to share with siblings now and give up a room for a foster child, this may lead to conflict if resentment develops, so we do not recommend this arrangement. The spare room must be available at the time of application. For example, if your child has gone to University and you plan to use their bedroom, will there be enough room when they come home for holidays?

## I'm not married – can I foster?

Yes – you can foster whether you are single, living with a partner or divorced.

## I'm 56 – am I too old to foster?

There is no upper age limit for becoming a foster carer. However, you will need energy and stamina to keep up with the children or young people placed with you. People of all ages can and do successfully foster.

## Can I foster if I live in rented accommodation?

You can foster whether you are renting or own your own home - just as long as you can provide a secure and stable environment for a child or children. Each foster child will need their own bedroom, as it is important for each child to have their own space. The property owner will be contacted to provide permission.

## Can I foster if I smoke?

Worcestershire Children First Fostering policy states that children should not be placed in a smoking household when they are under 5 years old, disabled or suffering from heart disease, glue ear or respiratory problems such as asthma. Children older than 5 can be placed in smoking households, but foster carers are required to smoke outside of the foster home only.

## Are there lots of checks?

We will carry out a variety of checks to make sure we don't appoint people who have a history of violence, or convictions for crimes against children. For example, a full Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check will be done. You will be required to undergo a medical check to ensure you are fit enough to care for children. We will also contact any previous Local Authority where you have lived to see if you have had any previous involvement with Children's Social Care. If you have children living at home, we will obtain school references and we require a reference from your current employer paid or voluntary involving children and vulnerable adults. These checks may seem intrusive; however, they are essential. We must make sure that foster children are kept safe from harm whilst in our care.

## I have no previous experience of fostering children – does this matter?

No previous experience of fostering is necessary but knowledge and experience or potential of dealing with children or young people is vital. This experience may have been gained from raising your own children, or indeed from working with children in an educational or childcare environment. There is a lot of support and training available for first time foster carers.

### **I'm out of work – can I still foster?**

Yes – we welcome people from all backgrounds, regardless of their employment or financial status. However, your financial situation needs to be stable.

### **How long will the assessment process take?**

The assessment itself should take around 16 weeks, but delays can occur whilst the information required is collected. Timescales can be affected by your availability, or by delays in receiving the references and checks required. To reduce this, we start the stage two assessment process whilst the checks are being processed so that most assessments take less than 4 months.

### **Can I continue to work outside the home?**

Yes –if you can still provide time and support as these are important to a child, especially when they are young. We will expect a foster carer to be at home if they care for pre-school children. A carer would need to be available for school age children in school hours if the child were ill and during school holidays. Foster carers will also need to attend meetings with social workers during normal working hours, training, and support the child to have contact with their birth families. Therefore, whilst many foster carers continue to work part time, a full-time job would require you to have a flexible employer who understands your fostering commitment.

### **What if I decide that fostering isn't for me?**

You can withdraw from the process at any point, should you decide that fostering isn't for you. You can talk through any concerns you have with your social worker and they will advise you. Sometimes you may want to take some time to think things over before you progress to the next stage. This is fine too and the whole process can go at a speed that suits you. The assessment process should be an open and honest discussion, so you should feel comfortable asking your social worker questions throughout.

### **If I already have children of my own, can I still foster? Will this be problematic?**

We actively encourage people with parenting experience. Your children will be included in the assessment process, as it is the whole family who fosters. Many birth children grow up to be foster carers themselves, and certainly benefit from living in a fostering household which has supported other children over the years.

### **Can I foster if I have a criminal conviction?**

People with minor convictions can foster children, but much depends upon the seriousness of the offence, how long ago the crime was committed and how you have lived your life since. People with convictions for violent or sexual offences against children will not be considered as foster carers.

### **How can I get more information on fostering?**

It is a good idea to gather as much information as you can and that is why we provide this pack. You can also visit external websites such as Foster Talk and the British Association for Adoption & Fostering (see details in the Find Out More section of this pack), which will provide you with general advice about fostering.

Our fostering advisers can also be contacted by calling: 0800 028 2158. Should you decide to proceed to the next stage, the social worker that visits you will be able to answer your questions.

### **I've read the pack and done my research. What's the next step?**

Once you've read the pack and feel you're ready to take the next step you can register your interest either by calling: 0800 028 2158 or by completing the Register your Interest Online Enquiry Form:

[www.worcestershire.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/fostering)

# ALREADY A FOSTER CARER?

AS AN EXPERIENCED FOSTER CARER YOU WILL ALREADY KNOW ABOUT THE PERSONAL SATISFACTION OF HELPING A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON TO ACHIEVE BETTER OUTCOMES.



Transferring to Worcestershire Children First Fostering is easier than you may think and could prevent you from having long gaps between placements in the future. For experienced carers we offer a 'fast track' to approval, as we know that you will already have undertaken relevant training and have an understanding of the fostering task.

We will evaluate the level of training you have already completed and may provide some refresher training where relevant, but you will not be expected to complete the 'Skills to Foster' course again.

We are required to complete a new Form F Assessment for you, but this can be completed much quicker, and we can gain a lot of the information we need by accessing references from your current agency/ fostering provider.

There are many advantages of being a foster carer for Worcestershire Children First Fostering. We are placing local Worcestershire children who have local social workers, and your fostering social worker will be close by. The children you care for will be closer to their schools and families, making meeting birth family much easier. Support is available around the clock and we offer a wide range of support services for you and any child or young person placed with you.

Our fees are competitive, and you will receive a retainer in between placements (for a period of up to 8 weeks). However, you can be confident that you will rarely be without a placement – as Worcestershire Children First we will always look first to our own pool of carers for placing our children, before accessing placements via external providers.





# FINANCIAL SUPPORT

IN WORCESTERSHIRE WE VALUE THE VITAL ROLE FOSTER CARERS PLAY AND BELIEVE IN PROVIDING THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT REQUIRED TO COVER THE COST OF CARING FOR A CHILD IN THEIR OWN HOME.



Age of Child	Allowance for the child	Level 1 fee + £102	Level 2 fee + £153	Level 3 fee + £204
0 - 2	£165	£267	£318	£369
3 - 4	£170	£272	£323	£374
5 - 10	£187	£289	£340	£391
11 - 15	£213	£315	£366	£417
16 - 17	£249	£351	£402	£453

In addition to the combined allowance and fees, WCFF carers receive on average £51 per week mileage allowance.

Payments are also available for:

- Holidays, birthdays, and festival payments
- School trips
- Clothing and School Uniform Allowance
- Retainer - a guaranteed fee when carers have a vacancy but are available to take a child
- Up to 4 weeks paid respite for carers per year
- Mileage
- Set up costs

Allowances and fees correct as at 1 April 2024

# TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARERS



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AT THE CENTRE OF WHAT WE DO. HOWEVER, TO ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE THE BEST CARE AVAILABLE WE RECOGNISE THAT WE NEED TO PROVIDE ALL OUR CARERS WITH HIGH QUALITY SUPPORT AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

## Support

- 24 hour support
- Supervising social worker - each foster family has its own social worker
- Child's social worker - a local Worcestershire based social worker
- Financial package - which recognises your skills and knowledge
- Retainer payments between placements
- Specialist support - clinical psychologists, educational support, family support
- Leisure and arts activities
- Fun days
- Foster Carer Conference
- Foster carer support meetings
- Membership of 'Foster Talk' (24 hours members support)
- Quarterly Newsletter

**" I HAVE ALWAYS FELT SUPPORTED. THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE AT THE END OF A PHONE "**

Sarah - foster carer



# TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARERS

## Training:

We provide a range of learning and development opportunities which gives you a career pathway and can be tailored to your individual needs.

## Before Approval (during the Assessment process):

- Emergency First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Safer Caring
- Understanding Behaviour
- Valuing Difference

## After Approval:

### Core Training:

- Family Time
- What is Health

### Developmental Training:

A comprehensive programme of training is available. Please visit the **foster carers training zone** for the up to date training programme and offer.

## Find out more

The following organisations will be able to offer support and advice in relation to the fostering process and the role of the foster carer.

### Foster Talk

**Post:** 5 Highfield Road, Edgbaston,  
Birmingham B153ED.

**Phone:** 0121 758 5013

**Email:** [enquiries@fostertalk.org](mailto:enquiries@fostertalk.org)

**Web:** [www.fostertalk.org](http://www.fostertalk.org)

### CoramBAAF

CoramBAAF Adoption & Fostering Academy is the leading membership organisation dedicated to improving outcomes for children and young people in care by supporting the agencies and professionals who work with them.

CoramBAAF is part of the Coram Group of charities which has been advancing the welfare, education and rights of children in the UK for over 275 years.

**Web:** [www.corambaaf.org.uk](http://www.corambaaf.org.uk)

**Phone:** 020 7520 0300

**Email:** [mail@corambaaf.org.uk](mailto:mail@corambaaf.org.uk)

**Post:** CoramBAAF, Coram Campus,  
41 Brunswick Square, London, WC1N 1AZ

### Fosterline

A place to discuss and ask any questions you may have about fostering

**Web:** [www.fosterline.info](http://www.fosterline.info)

**Phone:** 0800 040 7675