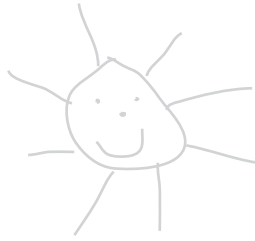


fostering
in somerset

Call to start your adventure
0800 587 9900



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Thank you for your enquiry about becoming a foster carer in Somerset.

In this booklet you will find lots of information about fostering and a few words from some of our foster carers to help you decide if it is right for you and your family.

You can visit our website www.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk to find more information, case studies, films and when the next information event is.

Why foster with Somerset County Council?

Fostering with your local Council means you are helping local children in your area.

We try to place children with our own carers before looking at independent agencies which means foster carers will have regular placements.

We make fee payments to all our foster carers and carers will progress up a payment scale when they build up their experience and complete training.

All foster carers can attend on-going training and social events, and we offer on call support - so you are never far from help and advice.



I decided to become a foster carer to make a difference, and I know I have made a difference.

Sue, Foster Carer

Who can foster?

We need people with life experience, a caring nature, time and stability to become foster carers in Somerset.

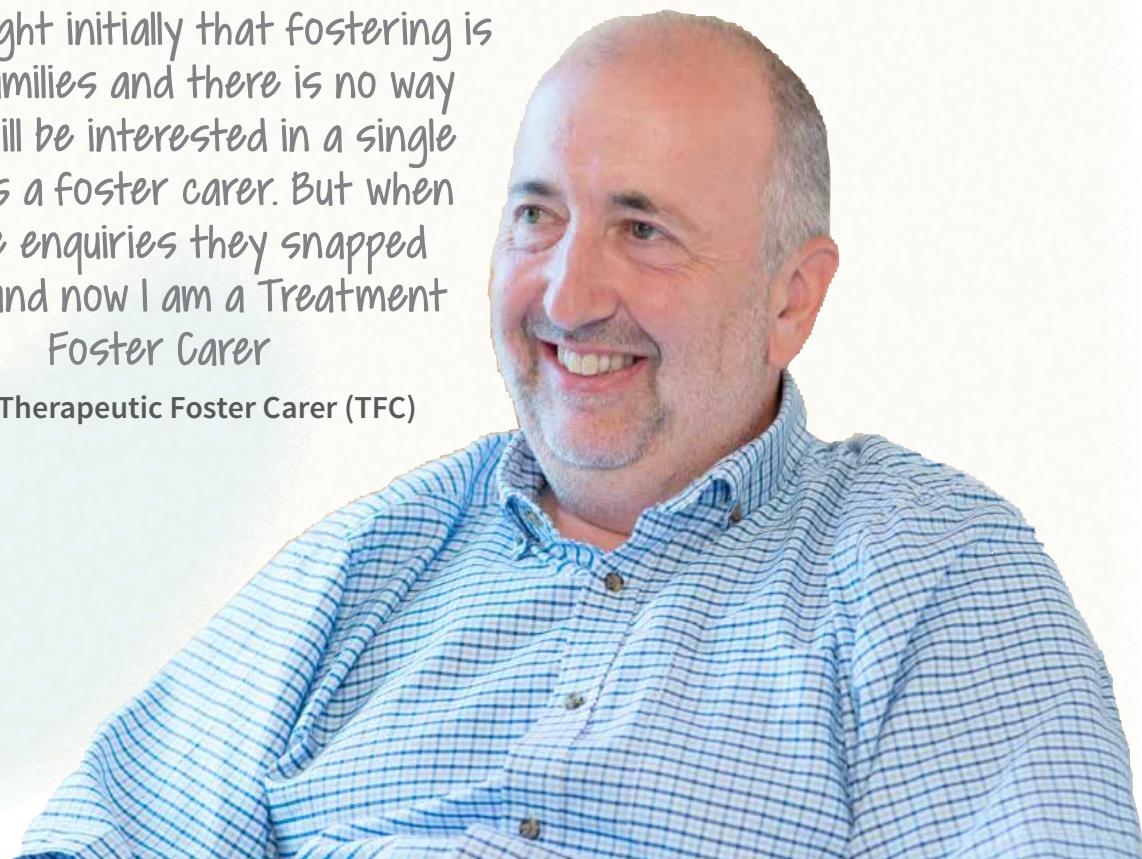
These are the main things you need to become a foster carer:

- ♥ A spare room in your home
- ♥ You need to be over 21
- ♥ Time and energy to care for a child or young person
- ♥ No serious convictions or convictions relating to children or young people



I thought initially that fostering is for families and there is no way they will be interested in a single male as a foster carer. But when I made enquiries they snapped me up and now I am a Treatment Foster Carer

John, Therapeutic Foster Carer (TFC)





I think a good foster carer is someone who listens and can understand when you are upset and someone that can make you feel at home and part of the family.

Young person

As part of the assessment a social worker will work with you to look at your home, family situation, experience and history to assess if you have the capacity and skills to look after a vulnerable child or young person. Any concerns will be discussed with you.

I'd like to foster

What is fostering?

Fostering is providing a safe and stable home overnight to a child or young person when their own family are unable to do so.

It is a rewarding and challenging role and foster carers have the opportunity to make a real difference to a child or young person's life.

There are lots of different types of fostering to meet the different needs of children in care. Fostering placements can be on a long term or short term basis. Some types of fostering can be done alongside a 'day job', but some more specialist types of foster care will require a carer who is home based, where effectively fostering becomes their 'job'.

Read through the different types of fostering on the next few pages and think carefully about which type of fostering suits you - your skills, knowledge and circumstances. We will advise you and help you make a decision on which type of fostering is best for you.

Fostering:

Fostering involves caring for children and young people aged between 0 and 18. Some carers will look after lots of different children, supporting them to move back to their birth families or on to alternative placements. This is a rewarding type of foster care with lots of variety.

However, some foster carers care for children and young people for the rest of their childhood. These permanent foster carers provide valuable support for children and young people, as they mature into adulthood. Most of the children and young people who need permanent fostering, are aged seven years and above.



When you do it well and you see a child develop, you know it is because you have given them a secure and stable and happy home. You don't get it right everyday, but you provide that sense of stability and security that they have never had and that goes a very long way

Sarah, Permanent Foster Carer



Sarah's film is on our website

School Holiday and Weekend Fostering

Some children and young people go to residential schools and do not have family members to care for them during the weekends and holidays. They need foster carers for these periods of time who will also remain in contact with them and support them during term time.

This is a good choice if you have a job that allows you to have time off at weekends and in school holidays and you really want to commit long term to one child, who will grow up with you.

Short Break Care

Short Break Care is a specialist fostering service for disabled children and young people, who might have a learning, physical or sensory disability, significant health care needs, or a combination of these. Skilled Foster Carers look after many of these children on a regular basis, and can provide a respite service for a child's parent carers or guardians. They also offer on-going support for children and young people who are unable to live with their birth parents or families.

This service aims to broaden the social lives and experience of the children and young people and their families.



Parent and Child

These are foster carers who care for both a parent and his or her young child. The role is one of support, advice and assessment, working closely with the child's social worker and their own supervising social worker. You may get a request for a placement for mother and child, father and child, or for both parents and their child.

This is a scheme that may be suitable for someone who is home based and can give practical and emotional support to young families to help them stay together.



When the social workers told me about the Parent and Child scheme I thought I could actually do some fostering where I am helping more than one person at a time, you are actually helping a family and I know the child in that situation is safe....For me, the best bits are when you see the family progress and do really well and become confident and good enough parents

Belinda, Parent & Child Foster Carer



Belinda's film is on our website

Therapeutic Foster Care

This scheme aims to support and nurture children aged three to twelve, who have experienced trauma and are struggling with managing their behaviour. Therapeutic Foster Carers work closely with a professional team, including psychologists, social workers and teaching professionals, to provide the right levels of support and nurturing that each child needs. The team around the child are committed to help shape behaviour change in children in the hope of preventing long term difficulties.

Placements can typically last nine to twelve months. Carers need to be resilient, have some experience of child care and child development and a willingness to work with a professional team to provide therapeutic and structured support to turn a child's life around. One foster carer will need to be home based and no other children can be living in the home because of the structure of the programme.

We offer specialist training and 24/7 on call support from a worker in the team who knows the carer and the child.



“The team that I work with on the Treatment Foster Care scheme is just fantastic, I really feel part of the team. I don't feel isolated at home, just battling away on my own, so if a crisis occurs I can phone up at any time day or night and just say 'help' or if my little girl is having a tantrum I can ask 'what do you suggest?'

Penny, TFC Foster Carer



Penny's film is on our website

Fostering older children and young people

In Somerset we seek people who want to help and support children and young people, aged 10 and older, through tough times. Fostering an older child is a fulfilling career with the chance to help lots of children and young people, competitive weekly fees, and an expert team on hand to support you.

There are many reasons why a child or young person might not be able to live with their birth families, and they need an enthusiastic and supportive foster carer or foster family to be there for them. Someone to offer them stability and guidance, and equip them with the life skills to help them change their lives for the better. Read about our schemes below.



Single Placement Scheme

Aimed at proactive, flexible individuals and couples with the determination to help children and young people with complex backgrounds and needs. Single Placement Scheme carers are part of a professional team, committed to helping the young person make positive steps in their lives. The main or sole carer will need to be home based and available for the young person, who will have high level behavioural, learning, emotional or medical needs, and will need to be the only child in the household. Placements can be short, intermediate or long-term.

I love caring-I brought up my five children single handed and have worked in children's residential units. I wanted to do something for myself after my children left home and this seemed a good fit.

David, Single Placement scheme foster carer

Stepping Stones

This scheme provides help, care and support to young people aged 16+ who are leaving the care of the local authority and need to continue to develop the skills they require to live independently.

Our Stepping Stones providers give these young people somewhere safe and secure to live and help them with the skills they need to make the transition to independent living.

This could be anything from showing them how to cook or manage their money, teaching them how to apply for work or college, or helping them with important life skills in general. Things some of us have been able to take for granted, but for others, will mean a colossal difference.

This is a good option for people who enjoy being with young adults, have an understanding of the needs of young people and the skills to communicate with them and have life skills to offer.

Originally I chose the Stepping Stones scheme because I am too busy to commit to fostering but thought I could manage young people approaching independence. It is great when the young people trust you and they come and talk to you about events in their lives or their day.

Jo, Stepping Stones carer

Remand Fostering

Remand foster carers provide a home to young people who have been remanded to the care of Somerset County Council to await Criminal Court proceedings. The young people will be aged between 10 and 18 and will stay with carers from one or two weeks, to several months.

While on the scheme, the young people will be given support and encouragement to tackle their offending behaviour by working through issues with their carers, youth offending team worker and their family. Remand foster carers will be expected to encourage and arrange for the young person to attend court and legal appointments.

Remand foster carers will have the skills and preferably experience to deal with more difficult young people. Ideally, remand carers will not have children of their own or other children placed so they can focus on supporting the young person.

Please see the Allowances and Fees insert for the latest rates for all the different types of foster care.



Our life was all over the place, but our foster carers took us in and gave us love, care and support, which made us feel safe. We're now much more settled, life is good and we're looking forward to the future. We can't thank them enough.

James and Simon are 9 and 13 and fostered together



Paula's film is on our website

Benefits and Support

Foster carers support

Allowance, fees and progression

A fostering allowance is paid to foster carers to cover the needs of the child. Part of the allowance is a contribution towards extra utility bills that come from having an extra person living in your home, such as gas, water and electricity bills as well as phone calls and wear and tear on appliances.

The rest of the allowance is for the child or young person's food, clothes, trips, pocket money etc.

All approved foster carers are paid a weekly fee and can progress on a payment scale when they build up their experience and attend training. The fee recognises the commitment that foster carers make to children in Somerset.

Practical and emotional support

You will have your own social worker that will visit you regularly and be available to help with any issues or difficulties that may arise. If you have an emergency or concern out of normal office hours you can call the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) or a dedicated fostering support line who will offer advice.

If you need a break, we may be able to provide respite care, depending on the needs of the child in placement.



The social work team have been excellent. Our Social Worker is there whenever we need her, she reassures us and tells us when we are doing a good job. She sees the changes and growths and helps us strive to be better. We value her honesty and feel she is on our side.

Christina, Foster Carer

See Allowances & Fees insert for the latest rates.

Training

We will encourage you to develop your skills throughout your fostering career; we offer a comprehensive package of training courses and e-learning to help and support you in this. There is also additional training on attachment and safer caring that you will need to complete.

Skills to Foster

During your assessment you will attend 'Skills to Foster' preparation training that will give you basic information on caring for a foster child. Foster carers and social workers deliver the training and it is a great opportunity to meet other people going through the assessment process.

National Fostering Standards

All foster carers are supported to complete the mandatory National Induction Standards for foster carers during their first year of fostering.

You will receive a bonus payment on successful completion of these standards.



Continuing professional development

We also have an annual programme of training which includes courses on:

- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Sex and relationships for young people in care
- Caring for children who've experienced abuse or death
- Keeping safe online and on social media

Help and advice on training is available and don't worry if you haven't studied for a while – we are here to support you.

A small payment is made to you when you attend training to encourage continual professional development and all travel and child care costs are covered. We also offer a number of E-Learning courses so you can learn from home.



The important thing to know is that you don't know it all, even if you think you do - you don't. The training is really important because there is so much to learn and you keep learning all the time. Nothing is better than the experience though but the training it vitally important.

Sue, Foster Carer



Sue's film is on our website

The Assessment Process

The assessment process takes between 6-8 months depending on your individual circumstances.

STEP

1

Initial enquiry

Give us a call or make an enquiry on our website. If you give us a call a social worker will have an initial chat with you, answer any questions you have and take some details from you. If you make an enquiry on our website a social worker will give you a call back to have an initial chat. You will be invited to an information event or we will come out to see you in your home.

STEP

2

Tell us you're interested

You will hopefully have had lots of information and decided if fostering is for you. There is some paperwork to complete and we will invite you to the initial training.

STEP

3

Training

To prepare you for the role you will attend 'Skills to Foster' training – see more information on page 16-17. Your assessment (step 4) may begin before your training depending on the training dates and your availability.

STEP

4

Assessment

This involves a social worker visiting you several times to get to know you, your family, your home and your experiences to make sure you can offer a child security, stability and safety. Plus we will do some checks, such as a DBS check and medical check, more information of the checks are on page 23.



STEP
7

Ongoing development and support

You will receive ongoing training and support and guidance from your fostering supervising social worker - more information on support is on page 14-15.



STEP
6

Placement

Once you've been approved, the fostering team will seek to identify an appropriate child for you and your family.



STEP
5

The Panel

Your assessing social worker will write a detailed report about you to present to the fostering panel. You will see the report and you can attend the panel. The panel decides whether to recommend your approval and a senior manager considers their recommendation to reach a decision.



A short film about the Panel is on our website



I used to foster for a private company, but switched to fostering with Somerset County Council as they are not-for-profit.

It was honestly the best thing I've ever done! I still get a similar fee and allowance, but have the benefit of great support and training. Plus, the peace of mind that money is being spent on the children rather than making a profit for shareholders."

Foster Carer, Eve

What checks will take place as part of the assessment?

There are a number of checks we have to do to make sure you can safely look after a child.

- ✓ Disclosure and Barring Service (Police check)
- ✓ A medical report via your GP
- ✓ A SSAFA check (Soldier, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association) if you have served in the Armed Forces
- ✓ A certificate of good conduct or similar - if you have lived abroad, for more than 90 days consecutively since your eighteenth birthday.
- ✓ A household risk assessment
- ✓ Employment checks
- ✓ Ofsted check if you are or have been a registered childminder
- ✓ References from family and friends
- ✓ An education reference from your child's school
- ✓ A reference from anyone you have parented with, such as an ex-partner.
We are mindful that this is not always comfortable but in practice this rarely presents any difficulties. You can speak to your social worker completing your assessment if you have particular concerns about this.



The social worker who ran our assessment was nice and understanding and I enjoyed meeting with her. It was a soul searching process but it is understandable that they need to ensure that children are going to good foster homes

Christina, Foster Carer



About the Children

There are 500 children and young people in care across Somerset.

We need foster carers for children of all ages, from 0 to 18.

We need foster carers for children of all ages, from babies to 18. We particularly need foster carers for long term placements – these foster carers will offer a home to a child or children who are unlikely to return to their birth parents, extended family or be adopted and need a permanent family to grow up in. We also need more foster carers for sibling groups, older children and teenagers and children with disabilities.

Some of our children have experienced neglect and abuse and have had a very traumatic life. We need foster carers who are calm, patient, resilient, kind and understanding. People who can offer meaningful quality time for children, a nurturing, stable environment and support to help them work through with what has happened to them.

Rory is a beautiful, smiley little two year old who loves to explore and meet new people.

Rory had a chaotic start to life because his mother was in a refuge fleeing domestic violence.

Rory needs a safe, stable and loving home to help him recover from that trauma.

Rory is very contented and loves adult company. He is not developing as quickly as other two year olds because of his early life experiences. Rory needs nurturing foster carers, who will take him to all his medical appointments, give him the attention he deserves and lots of time to socialise with other children.



There are lots of profiles of children on our website

Please note: the names of the children have been changed to protect their identity and stock images have been used.

Kelly and Callum are brother and sister and are aged 10 and 5 and need a foster placement.

Kelly is a likeable young lady who enjoys school, animals, music, TV, games, cooking and bowling.

Kelly is well behaved in the home and any problems are normally at school – although she does love school and would not under any circumstances miss a day. Behavioural problems at school are normally caused when she does not want to do something that she has been asked to do. The school have been very understanding and accommodating to her needs.

Kelly's young brother Callum is a lively active boy who is always smiling and full of beans. He enjoys playing outside on his bike and being able to run around and let off steam. He also likes to play with cars, train sets, watch TV, and is very good at puzzles.

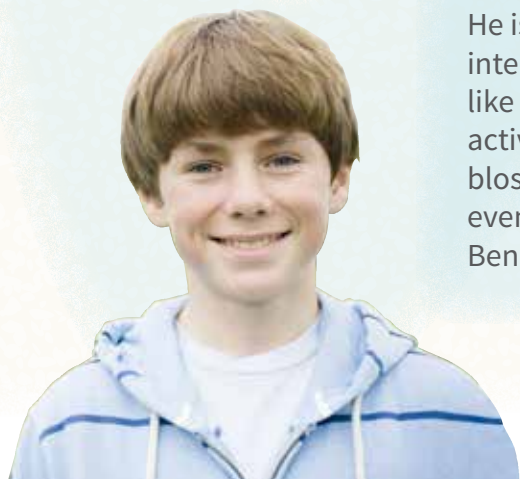
Whilst Callum's speech and language can sometimes be unclear, this has been steadily improving whilst he has been in foster care. Callum requires clear routines and enjoys being kept busy.

Kelly and Callum need an mainstream foster placement whilst we decide if they should return to their birth parents or a relative or be placed in long term foster care.



Ben is 13 and needs a permanent foster placement. He enjoys lots of practical and outdoor activities and especially enjoys rugby and football.

He is an avid reader and also likes to be read to. Ben shows an interest in lots of activities. Ben enjoys playing X box and would like to be with a family who have lots of energy and have an active family life. Since coming into local authority care ben has blossomed into a likeable and rewarding young person. Recent events in Ben's life have increased his anxiety considerable and Ben is in need of carers who can continue offering him stability.



What next?

Go to an Event

Come along to our next information event to find out more about fostering and adoption, with social workers, foster carers and adopters on hand to answer your questions. For our latest event dates and details, visit www.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk

Do your research

Visit www.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk to find out more, read stories from our foster carers and adopters and look at profiles of children who need foster carers and adopters.

Make an enquiry

Fill in the enquiry form on our website, and a member of the team will call you back to take some details and answer your questions, or call us on 0800 587 9900.



www.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk



0800 587 9900

fostering in somerset

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RNID typetalk