



**FOSTER FOR
PEMBROKESHIRE**

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774650**

**FOSTER
FOR
PEMBROKESHIRE**

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MORE
TAKE A LOOK
INSIDE!**



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Thank you for your interest in fostering for Pembrokeshire. Fostering can be challenging as well as incredibly rewarding. Foster carers provide care and support to vulnerable children and young people and we have over 100 children in foster care at any one time in Pembrokeshire.

We need carers who are able to care for children of all ages but we have a particular need for carers for school age children and teenagers, children with disabilities and sibling groups. We hope that this guide answers some of your questions about fostering for Pembrokeshire.

We would be happy to answer any further questions that you might have and would encourage you to take the next step on a truly rewarding journey by calling 01437 774650 arrange an initial home visit.

The Family Placement Team

FOSTERING FOR PEMBROKESHIRE

We are part of Pembrokeshire County Council and our role is to provide safe, caring homes for children and young people from Pembrokeshire who, for various reasons, are not able to live with their birth families.

Regrettably there is always a demand for our services which means that we are always ready to welcome new carers. Looking after vulnerable children is not the easiest thing in the world, but the rewards can be immeasurable.

We need foster carers from all walks of life – it doesn't matter if you are married, divorced, living with a partner or single; gay, lesbian or transgender; own or rent your own home; have a job or not. The one thing that everyone must have is a spare room.

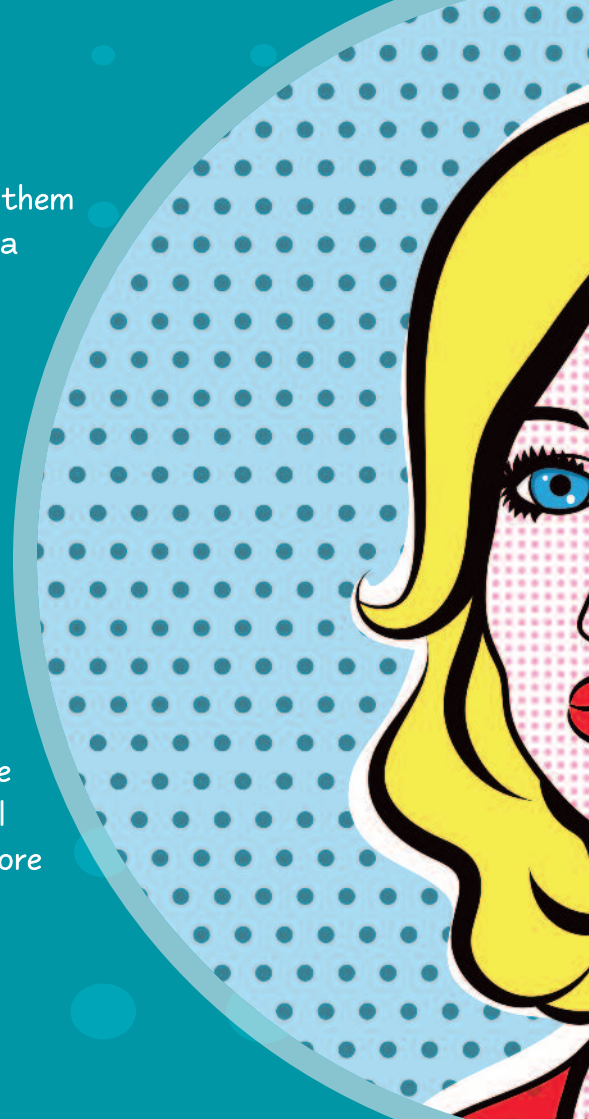


WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

Fostering is looking after a child in a family setting and caring for them while their own parents are unable to do so. Foster care provides a safe, secure and stable environment for children, helping them to develop and succeed. The length of time a child needs to spend in foster care varies according to their circumstances, from a few hours, days, weeks or years. Whatever the timescale, foster care is about providing children with a safe, stable, family environment for as long as they need it.

Foster carers play a big part in the plans for a foster child and are part of a team helping to make changes and improvements in a child's life.

Fostering does not need to be an all or nothing commitment. There are different types of fostering that you can specialise in. You will probably find that the qualities you have will make you naturally more suited to one type than another.



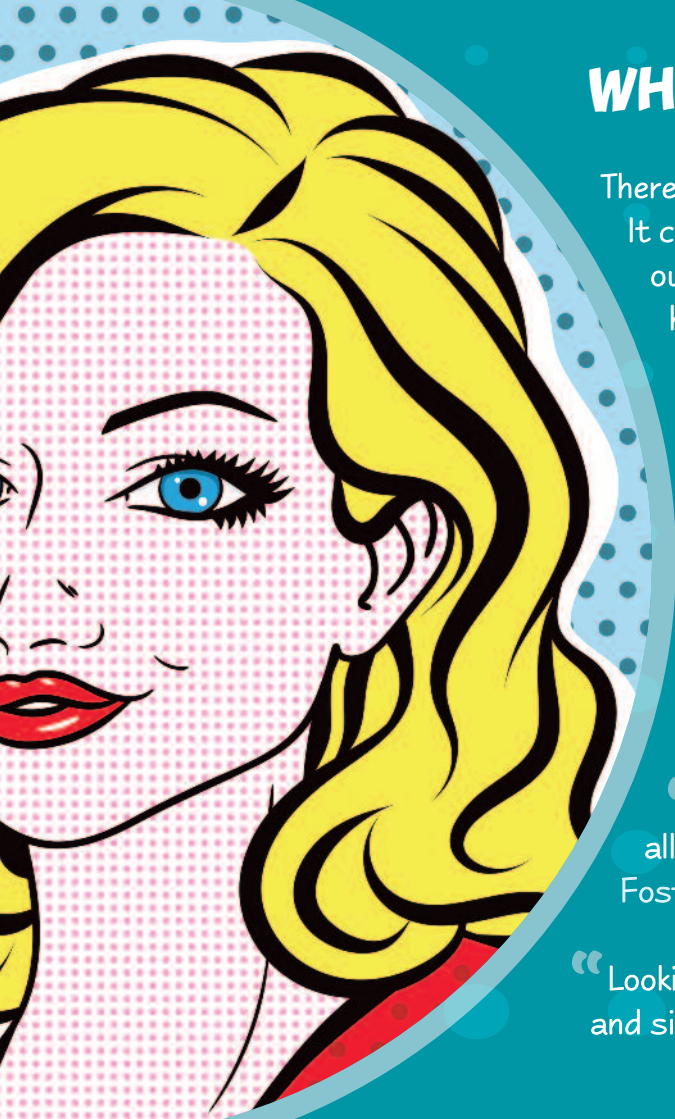
WHO NEEDS FOSTERING?

There are a number of reasons why children come into foster care. It could be a temporary solution while a family crisis is sorted out or their parents are finding it difficult to cope and need a helping hand. Some children may have experienced abuse, neglect or domestic violence. Whatever the reasons it is through no fault of their own.

There is always a need to find foster carers for teenagers and, where possible we try and keep brothers and sisters together. As well as general fostering placements we also need family settings for young people moving to independence as well as young mums and dads and their babies.

“My sister was in a different placement to me. We ran away all the time to see each other. We should have been together.”
Foster child

“Looking after 3 children is challenging but it means that brothers and sisters can stay together.” Foster carer caring for siblings



DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOSTERING

There are many different types of fostering that carers can choose to specialise in. All of them come with different challenges and rewards. It is important to explore which type of fostering will be most suited to you and your family.

EMERGENCY

Emergency foster carers need to be prepared to take a child into their home at any time of the night or day and have them stay for a few days. This type of fostering is unplanned and used at short notice, for example, if a single parent is taken into hospital and there is no one to care for their child. Children usually only stay for a few days while longer term plans are being considered.

Young people can feel scared and unsafe when moving to a new placement because they do not know where they are going and who they will be living with.

You don't know who your person is going to be – looking after you; you don't know anything about them. You don't know what kind of food they'll have in that family. You don't know what time they'll eat. You don't know what time bedtime is or what the system for laundry is?



SHORT TERM

This might mean looking after a child for a few nights, a few months, or sometimes for more than a year. Short term carers will be moving a child on to one of the following:

- Back home to birth parents
- To an extended family member
- To an adoptive family
- To long term foster carers
- To independence

Some short term foster placements are planned but sometimes a placement is needed in an emergency. Short term foster carers help many children and young people throughout their fostering career.

Their skills lie in caring for children through periods of uncertainty, whilst plans are made and then helping the child move on. Their rewards come from knowing that they have contributed to the child's health and wellbeing and hopefully increased the chances of them having a settled future.



LONG TERM

Sometimes children cannot return to live with their birth families and adoption is not appropriate. Usually this applies to children who are considered too old for adoption. These children need long term foster care which allows them to have a stable family life whilst maintaining links with their birth family. Long term foster carers generally look after a child until independence and will continue to work as part of a team which will include the local authority and the birth family.

“ My foster carer kept in touch and whenever I had trouble with studying, I knew I could pick up the phone and she would be there for me. ” Care leaver

“ It was good to have a hug, and good for them to say 'I love you, we're proud of you' ” Foster child

“ It's really rewarding when you see a day-by-day improvement in a child. You see them build up self-esteem and come out of their shell. Then you know you are really making a difference. ” Foster Carer



RESPIRE OR SHORT BREAK

Respite or short break placements are usually intended to support families so that they can continue to bring up their own children, usually through a series of planned overnight, weekend or holiday stays. Sometimes they are used to support foster families. Many users of short break placements are disabled children but children with other needs may need short breaks. Children on short breaks are not always looked after children.

“By providing short breaks for families we help them recharge their batteries and stay together.” Short break carer

PARENT AND CHILD

Increasingly we have a need for parent and child placements and we need more foster carers who are willing to take on this type of placement. Parents live with their children in a foster carers' home. This enables them to stay together and develop a strong relationship at a crucial developmental stage in their lives.

The foster carer supports and offers guidance to the parent to develop their parenting skills in a natural, warm and nurturing family environment. Parent and child placements do not just accommodate 'mother and baby' and can involve supporting a mother and siblings, father and child or mother, father and child.





Carers need to find a balance between keeping professional boundaries while being warm and supportive and need patience, the ability to offer constructive criticism and model good parenting. This requires a sensitive, nurturing, calm personality combined with good judgement and a willingness to make use of professional support.

SUPPORTED LODGINGS PROVIDERS

Supported lodgings is an accommodation scheme for young people leaving care, aged 16–21, who are not yet ready to live on their own. The aim is to offer young people the opportunity to live in the home of an approved person who will help them prepare for independent living.

This will be a safe and supportive environment where a young person can develop the practical skills and emotional maturity to move on and cope with living independently. The most important thing is that you like being with teenagers and have an understanding of some of the issues they may face, as well as the time and flexibility to offer advice and support.

WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU NEED TO BE A FOSTER CARER?

Believe it or not you are probably more qualified to be a foster carer than you realise. Are you a good listener? Are you pretty thick skinned? Can you diffuse situations with humour or make a child's worries disappear with a reassuring hug? If any of these qualities remind you of you and if you are down to earth with a stable home life, you could provide the foundations on which a child can rebuild their life.

The main qualities that make an effective foster carer are a genuine interest in children and young people and a focus on the child's best interests. Other strong attributes include:

- empathy and good listening skills
- perseverance when things get tough
- flexibility and adaptability
- patience and humour
- stability and consistency in your personal and family life
- an ability to guide and discipline children without the use of physical punishment
- being able to look after yourself emotionally and staying well
- a willingness to work with other people in the child's life such as birth parents and social workers
- a willingness to support the child to develop a sense of identity that includes their culture, language and religion, where appropriate.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Foster carers play a big part in the plans for a foster child. They are part of a team helping to make changes and improvements in a child's life.

They help the team by providing a safe and secure environment for the child. Carers are often asked to report on how well a child is doing with them. This means that carers need to make sure that every aspect of the child's care is looked after and nurtured, including their emotional and physical health, as well as making sure the child does well developmentally and academically.

Some of the everyday tasks that carers do include:

- Promoting contact with birth parents and family
- Helping with independence skills and preparation for adult life
- Encouraging children to participate in out of school activities
- Supporting children's health and emotional needs

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

Becoming a foster carer is a massive responsibility and that is why we make sure our foster carers receive support and encouragement. As a foster carer you will have a supervising social worker who will work with you to help you learn more as you develop your fostering career. They will provide supervision and support, suggest suitable training and development opportunities to complement and develop the skills you already have and you will also get the chance to gain qualifications.



Life as a foster carer is highly rewarding and Pembrokeshire foster carers are part of a team that will support you every step of the way. In addition to your own support network of family and friends, you can rely on support from the Family Placement Team. We recognise that fostering can be difficult and demanding. We view our carers as professionals who possess an ever-increasing level of skills and responsibility. Our package of training assists our carers to develop to their full potential.

Support includes:

- A generous weekly allowance to cover the cost of looking after a child which differs according to the age of the child.
- A designated supervising social worker to support and advise you
- Support from a large network of fellow foster carers and the Pembrokeshire Foster Carer Association with regular foster carer events and coffee mornings
- Membership of Foster Talk
- Peer mentoring and regular support groups for carers to share best practice, advice and experiences
- Extensive pre-approval training and regular training opportunities including QCF Training
- Regular newsletters from the team
- A carer's handbook containing guidelines and information.
- Out of hours social worker support
- Discounted family Pembrokeshire Leisure Pass
- Support group for your own children
- Long service awards
- Looked After Children's Nurse
- Looked After Children's Teacher
- Specialist advice and consultation from dedicated psychology service
- Registered service with CIW

10 STEPS TO BECOME A FOSTER CARER

1. Call 01437 774650. We will answer any queries you may have.
2. We will arrange to meet with you and your family members at home and talk through all the things you need to know.
3. If we are both happy to proceed, you will be asked to complete our application and consent forms.
4. You will be invited to Skills to Foster training.
5. Should we both agree that your application will proceed you will meet the social worker who will carry out the assessment on both you and your household.
6. We will complete your assessment which will include police and thorough background checks.
7. Your social worker will submit a full report to the fostering panel who will consider your suitability to foster.
8. Fostering panel will make a recommendation about your approval as a foster carer.
9. Once approved, you are ready to foster. The next step is the most exciting one - the placement of your first child or children.
10. You are on your journey. You will enjoy regular support, supervision and encouragement from your social worker and the rest of the fostering team.



Being a foster carer is a huge decision and one that should not be rushed. Call us when you are ready and we will be here to take each step with you. Together we will explore your skills and qualities and discuss which type of fostering would suit you best. We look forward to hearing from you.