



Could you foster a Shropshire child?



Children and
Young People's Services

So what is fostering?...

A foster carer offers love, support and a secure home to children who, for whatever reason, cannot live with their own families.

Foster care in Shropshire focuses on the needs of each child and offers support to whole families. It can be challenging and stressful – a child may have suffered recent abuse and neglect or been caught at the centre of a family crisis.

But it can be enormously rewarding and a lot of fun too. Foster carers touch the lives of each and every child they welcome into their home, whether it's for a matter of days or a matter of years.

By committing their time and their love, carers give children – and often whole families – the time and the space to rebuild their lives.



...and who needs fostering?

Any child who cannot be cared for by their own family.

There are babies and toddlers. There are children with special needs. There are brothers and sisters who need to stay together. There are teenagers and young mothers who need a little extra support before they make their own way in life.

Many will have experienced domestic crises, perhaps violence, abuse, illness, neglect, drink or drug addiction. Most will be feeling bewildered and upset about moving in with strangers.

It's a foster carer's responsibility to bring stability and continuity to these children's lives while the difficulties are being sorted out. This often includes working closely with children's parents. The secret is simply to offer what every child wants and needs - family life, friends, love and respect.



Who can foster a child?...

Potentially, anyone able to give a child a secure and loving home can foster, subject to eligibility, which is explained later in the brochure. Just like the children they help, carers come from all walks of life. What's important is that they all have the time, space and commitment to love and support the children in their care.

You don't need to be rich. You don't need to be working. You don't need to be married. You don't even need to have children of your own.

But you do have to care. You have to be patient, understanding, resilient – and reasonably fit!

Most of all, you need to understand children and their needs and have had experience of dealing with your own or other people's children.



...and are there different types of fostering?

A foster carer may be asked to look after children of all ages, and from all sorts of backgrounds – young children, teenagers, sibling groups and children with disabilities. Depending on the circumstances of the child and their family, the aim of each placement can vary.

The aim of fostering is to return the child to his or her own family or to a permanent placement as soon as possible. This can be anything from an overnight stay to several months.

An emergency placement may be made when social workers feel it is essential to take the child away from a particular situation that is unsafe.

Sometimes long term or permanent foster care offers older children care and security in a family for as long as it is needed. Children in long term foster care can grow up to reach their potential and to keep in touch with their own families.

Shared Care and Short Break foster care are terms to cover a variety of different types of part time care, which may be anything from a few hours each week to a weekend a month.



What support do foster carers get?...

We want our foster carers to enjoy fostering and be equipped to do it well, which is why we provide a comprehensive range of training and support services.

Every foster carer in Shropshire has a specialist Social Worker to support them and provide regular feedback, supervision and guidance. They will help you build your own development plan to give you the knowledge and skills to make a difference.

You will also have access to a specialist multi-agency support team and a 24/7 advice and support line run by experienced foster carers.

Allowances are paid in differing ways depending on the age of the children being fostered. This means foster carers can potentially receive a financial package of around £550 per week if looking after a teenager. In addition to this, festival allowances and holiday payments are paid on an annual basis.



...and what happens when I apply to become a carer?

Becoming a foster carer can take up to 6 months and we will have to carry out personal checks and take up references.

As a first step, we will invite you along to a short event, where we'll explain the implications, responsibilities and financial support in more detail.

Existing foster carers will tell you what it is really like to be a foster carer and explain their experiences. Alternatively, one of our Social Workers can visit your home to discuss your situation.

Following a rigorous series of personal checks and references, you will then be required to have a medical examination carried out by your GP and to attend preparation training.

A social worker will undertake a home study assessment which will usually take 3 or 4 months.

If you decide to proceed, we will send an assessment of your suitability to our Fostering Panel for consideration. If at all possible, there is an expectation that you will attend to lend weight to your application .



So where do I go from here?...

If you would like to know more about fostering, we would love to hear from you.

You can contact us in a number of ways, on our freephone at **0800 783 8798**, e-mail at **shropshirefostering@ontracagency.com** or by visiting our website at **shropshire.gov.uk/fostering**

Children and Young People's Service Directorate
Children's Placement Service
Mount McKinley House
Shrewsbury Business Park
Shrewsbury
SY2 6FG

We can arrange for you to attend an event or a Social Worker can visit you with more details. We look forward to hearing from you.



Photographs posed by models



Children and
Young People's Services



www.shropshire.gov.uk/
fostering