

Fostering in local communities

Introductions

F⁴OSTER



Launched in 2018, Foster4 is three Local Authorities working together with one aim:

To **recruit** and **support** a strong community of local foster carers who can provide safe, stable, high-quality childhoods for children who can't live with their families.

What is fostering?

- Providing a safe, secure and nurturing family environment for children who cannot live with their own family.
- Foster care allows children to keep in contact with their own family, if they wish and if it is in their best interests.
- Foster carers do not have parental responsibility for any children they foster, they have delegated authority.
- Foster carers may provide temporary care to children while parents get help sorting out problems or take a break.
- Fostering may be used to help children or young people through a difficult period in their lives.
- Often children will return home once the problems have been resolved and parents are able to look after them safely.
- Other times children may stay with foster carers or move to alternative permanent foster care, some may be adopted, and others will move on to live independently.

Reasons children need fostering

Social Workers try hard to keep children with their families although there are occasions where children need fostering.

- Neglect, physical and emotional harm, sexual abuse.
- Family circumstances
- Parental illness/hospital admission
- Parents may have learning difficulties
- Parental drug and alcohol misuse, poor mental health and domestic abuse.

Current picture

- At the end of March 2022, in England, there were 82,170 children in care, 57,540 of those children were living with foster families.
- There are around 45,000 fostering households in England.
- With over 60% of those children in care as a result of or because they were at risk of abuse or neglect.

[Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2022 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

In Cheshire West and Chester we have:

- 580 children in care
- 110 approved mainstream fostering households
- 90 connected carer households

(May 2023)



Recruitment need

The Fostering Network estimates that a further 9,300 foster families are needed in the next 12 months alone, in order to ensure all fostered children can live with the right family for them.

There is a particular need for foster carers to look after:

- Siblings
- Teenagers
- Children with disabilities
- Asylum seeking children
- Babies and toddlers
- Parent and child
- Permanent foster carers

Without enough foster families willing and able to offer homes, some children will find themselves living a long way from family, school and friends, being split up from brothers and sisters, or being placed with a foster carer who does not have the ideal skills and experience to meet their specific needs.



Who can foster?

- Adults with some life skills and experience
- Spare bedroom
- Any relationship status
- LGBT+ inclusive
- No upper age limit
- Support network
- No convictions/cautions against children
- Households with birth children and pets welcome!



Types of fostering

- Short term
- Permanent
- Emergency
- Carer to carer short stays
- Short breaks for disabled children
- Parent and child

Role of a foster carer

- Include the child as part of your family
- Promote the importance of education
- Attend meetings and give your input
- Take the child to family time and remain non-judgemental
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle
- Keep daily logs
- Support the child to have hobbies
- Provide a stimulating household
- Support the child to develop independence skills
- Commit to training and personal development



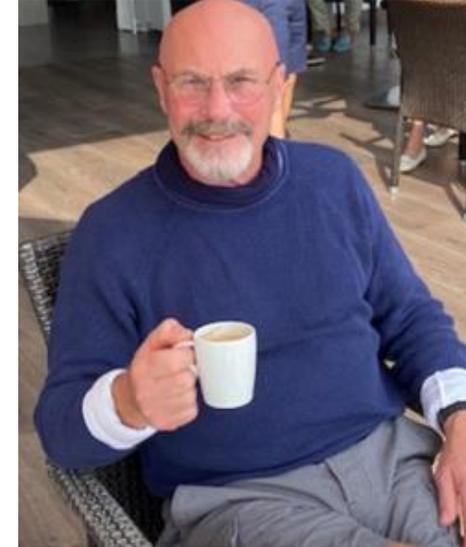
What are the steps to become a foster carer?

- Enquire with Foster4
- Attend an information session (not mandatory)
- Expression of Interest
- Initial visit
- Application form
- Attend skills to foster training & have your assessment
- Approval including panel & ADM
- Welcome to the fostering family!



What happens once you're an approved foster carer?

- Fostering register
- Child's social worker contacts the fostering team
- 'Matching' process
- Calls to foster carers
- Yes – introductory arrangements
- No – you don't need to say yes to every request!



Training & support

- Wide range of local face to face and online courses including mandatory training courses and additional courses dependent on your interests and the needs of the children you're caring for.
- Induction and placement support from the Intervention Hub.
- Trauma informed approach to working with children and families.
- Supervising Social Worker visits at least monthly
- Duty Social Worker
- Out of hours duty team
- 7 support groups across the borough for foster carers
- Foster carer mentor 'buddy'
- Sons and daughters support group and activities
- Support network of foster carers



Benefits

- Paid breaks of up to 2 weeks per year
- Provided with a MAX card and reimbursed for a Blue Light card
- Membership to The Fostering Network
- Swimming passes for fostering families
- Complimentary tickets to events
- Access to a 7 seater pool car for free to use at any time
- All the equipment you will need (car seats, prams, bedroom furniture).
- Events and competitions



[Cheshire West and Chester Fostering Family Support Package by Foster4 - Flipsnack](#)

Fostering allowances

- Government set minimum weekly allowances for foster carers
[Help and support for foster parents: Help with the cost of fostering - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/help-and-support-for-foster-parents/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering)
- Cheshire West and Chester's allowances are made up of two components, the allowance and the fee.
- All carers receive the allowance, relating to the child's age and whether or not they have a disability.
- Allowance to cover costs for caring for a child, additional payments for birthday, holiday, festivals and mileage.
- Additional one-off payments can be made when a child starts primary/secondary school to purchase new uniforms; when a child comes to you and does not have adequate clothing; and religious rites of passage.
- Fee payment based on your skills, knowledge and experience.



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Fostering with your local council

- Council foster carers will have local children placed with them, which generally leads to much more positive outcomes for children. Children are able to remain in their community and keep close to their friends, family and school.
- Councils will always try and match children with their own carers first. This is because they have recruited, assessed and trained them, therefore know how well they will be able to meet the needs of children that need to be fostered.
- Councils provide local support and training and foster carers become part of a local network of foster carers.
- There are also independent fostering agencies (IFAs), which are mostly profit-making businesses. Councils only look to place children with agency foster carers when there are no suitable council carers with space.

Source: Foster With Your Council



Specialist Foster Carer scheme

- Cheshire West and Chester Council are looking to recruit 2-3 sets of skilled and experienced foster carers who have worked with adolescents to join our Specialist Foster Carer Scheme.
- The scheme aims to enable young people to step down from residential care and move to a family environment that can continue to meet their needs.
- Carers within the scheme will be part of a wraparound professional support team composing of a social worker, teacher and family support workers.
- The Specialist Foster Carer Profile provides information such as the key requirements, contract and pay, personal characteristics, key experience and support provided.



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How we spread the word

- Leaflet drops, billboard ads, bus rears, NHS staff app
- Posters and flyers on community noticeboards in libraries, leisure centres, community centres and supermarkets.
- Pop up banners placed in libraries, leisure centres, children's centres and staff offices.
- Cheshire West and Chester Council job vacancy page
- Regular drop in's, information stands and large scale events
- Regular information sessions in-person and online
- Posts on Facebook and Instagram
[Foster4 Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington LAs | Warrington | Facebook Foster4 \(@foster4cheshire\)](#) • [Instagram photos and videos](#)
- Blog posts on Foster4 website - [Blogs - Foster 4](#)



How you can help

- Promote fostering in your community, we can supply you with posters and leaflets.
- Invite us to local events where we could promote fostering.
- Consider fostering and encourage people you know to get in touch if they are interested in fostering.
- If you're on social media please follow us, like and share our posts @foster4cheshire



Final words from a young person

“My foster parents are really sweet and kind. They go out of their way just to see me smile and happy. I remember the first day I arrived at my placement, I was in tears and I couldn't look them in the eye due to how sad I was. Now 5 years have passed and look at me now. We are one family now getting on perfectly well and I don't even feel I'm fostered. My life has changed and I have come out of the dark tunnel of my past life . Now I am thriving and everyone loves me. I am as happy as can be for the world's best foster carers belong to me.”

