Coventry City Council

FOSTER WITH COVENTRY

Foster with Coventry





Coventry needs more foster carers for Coventry children

Thank you for expressing an interest in fostering with Coventry City Council.

We hope you find this booklet helpful in considering whether you would like to apply to join our team of foster carers. Please do get in touch if you have any questions or need any further information and we will be very happy to help.

Fostering with Coventry City Council means you are providing Coventry children with a safe, positive, and nurturing home whilst decisions are being made about their future. The essential work conducted by Coventry foster carers means that children can get the stability, support and care they need, at what can be a challenging time in their lives.

Foster carers, therefore, make a real difference to the lives of Coventry children.

There are **different types of fostering** which are explored in this brochure. Coventry has a particular need for foster carers who can, with our support, care for brothers and sisters to stay together, foster carers who can provide care and support for teenagers and foster carers, who can care for children who have more complex needs.

If you wish to discuss in more detail what may work for you and your situation, please get in touch.

We hope you find the information that you need in this brochure and look forward to answering any questions you may have about fostering with us.



> The positive experience we've had of fostering is largely down to her and the support we've received from her, so we wanted to acknowledge that to you.
>
> Coventry foster carer

> When dealing with anyone from the foster service I feel valid, listened to, appreciated and valued.
>
> Coventry foster carer

Why foster with Coventry?

You will receive very high quality support from our extremely experienced, responsive and stable team.

Receive competitive payments for your work well above the government's minimum recommended payment.

Thorough induction and a range of core and bespoke training to enable you to meet the needs of children in your care.

To be supported to be therapeutic in your approach and provided with access to additional therapeutic support.

In Coventry we are dedicated to ensuring our children, whilst in foster care and when appropriate, remain near to their family, friends, and school.

Fostering with your local authority means that you will be contacted first when we need to identify foster carers to look after children who come into our care. We always look to match children with our own team of foster carers before looking further afield. This means you are much more likely to have regular, local foster arrangements with us than with an external, independent agency.

As part of the Council we are, of course, not for profit, meaning that the crucial investments made into fostering remain in the city, benefiting Coventry children, families and the community.

We hold regular 'meet the team' information sessions - (see our website or social media for details) to get an idea of what it would be like to work as part of the team and have all your questions answered.

Coventry City Council follow The Fostering Network's advice on separating out a 'skills fee' (paid to foster carers for their role as a foster carer) and the 'maintenance allowance' (to cover the cost of caring for the children). If you are looking at payments for foster carers, both figures need to be added together alongside other additional benefits and allowances to make comparisons. We will welcome the opportunity to talk this through with you if you need to make any comparisons to your current situation or if you have received other information from elsewhere.



What is fostering?

Foster carers provide safe, positive, and nurturing homes to children who, for a variety of different reasons, are not able to live with their family. Foster carers provide individualised day-to-day care, including, getting them to school and back, helping with their education and any other activities they enjoy.

Children who require a foster home will, most often, remain at their present school or nursery (if relevant) as often teachers or key workers are prominent and positive role models in children's lives. Remaining in these familiar settings, with their friends, provides them with a level of consistency and stability.

Many children who require foster care, have at least one brother or sister and we always look at ways to keep them together when it is in their best interests. Sometimes depending on age/gender/other factors, siblings can share a room. However, it is not appropriate for children coming into the fostering household to share a room with a child who is not their sibling.

In addition, foster carers support children to see their family members and transport to other appointments as needed. These are most often within the city boundary and we look to match children with foster carers who can undertake these tasks as part of their fostering role.

Foster carers are considered a crucial part of the team caring for children and are involved not only in decisions regarding the children, but also in how our services are delivered and improved. We actively involve our foster carers in helping us to constantly improve our services for the children and families we work with.

Foster carers are self-employed for their fostering role. Due to specific taxation arrangements for foster carers, the income for fostering rarely results in tax being payable and is disregarded for most benefits too. We can signpost you to up-to-date information regarding this.

> "It doesn't matter what a person's background is - married, single, gay, straight, home-owner or not - what matters is that foster carers can be understanding, can see things from the child's perspective and be prepared to advocate and support the children and, despite any challenges that they may need to overcome, can recognise the potential in a child."
>
> Sarah (Social Worker)

Why do children need foster care?

There are many reasons for children of all ages, and diverse backgrounds needing to come into the care of the local authority, such as a crisis at home, parents who need some extra support to help them parent successfully, drug or alcohol dependency or concerns around violence in the home. Children will need to be cared for by foster carers whilst support is put in place and future decisions can be made.

When children need to be cared for by a foster carer, we would like to put arrangements in place for their arrival. However, there are also times when social workers and other professionals involved with the child/ren will be so concerned about their immediate safety, they may be needing a foster home very quickly.

It is also important that children have as much stability as possible during what is often an unsettling time for them - so, we want to keep children fairly local to their family, friends and school or nursery.

Many children can return home after a period in foster care, but some may move onto other family members who are able to care for them rather than their birth parents. Where it is not possible for a child to return to their own family, we need to find a new permanent home for them. Depending on the needs of the child, this is when we look for adopters or for foster carers, who will provide care long term.

> “We became foster carers to give love, stability, support and guidance to children who need it. We have seen massive improvements with children’s behaviour, speech and language and it is great to know that you have been a part of that.”
>
> Emma
> Coventry Foster Carer



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Support and training for foster carers

All foster carers attend our 'Skills to Foster' course as part of the preparation and assessment to become an approved foster carer. The training is led by our team and is a great way to find out all about fostering, what it is like, what children need from their foster carers and managing different situations. The course is also a good way to meet other people at the same part of their fostering journey.

Fostering with Coventry City Council means that you will get to know the different members of the team working alongside you. This team includes children's social workers, health colleagues, managers and, of course, your own dedicated supervising social worker.

Your social worker will visit you at least every two weeks when you first start fostering, and then according to your needs, but at least every four weeks. Their role is to ensure that you have the skills and support to be able to care for the children and to help you access any additional training or support services you may need. They will also put you in contact with other local foster carers if you wish and let you know about other meet-ups and events. They are there for you to talk over anything that is worrying you and to celebrate the rewards and successes of your fostering experience!

Coventry City Council foster carers frequently tell us that they feel a real part of a Coventry fostering community and, whether living in Coventry or surrounding areas, enjoy the regular meet-ups with other foster carers, coffee mornings and social events. Our foster carers are also automatically members of The Fostering Network and New Family Social (a charity for LGBTQ+ carers) and can access their helplines, events and other activities.

Newly approved foster carers are offered additional support through a mentoring arrangement with an experienced foster carer.

There are other training modules which cover a range of core subjects relevant to fostering and these are normally undertaken within the first year of fostering with support from your supervising social worker. New foster carers also have the support of their supervising social worker to complete an induction programme and go on to complete an induction portfolio.

Most courses, particularly the 'core' modules, are undertaken as a group, however, there are also online courses which foster carers can undertake.

Fostering is often referred to as a lifestyle career and although it is a very different type of role to a 'nine to five' job, it does offer career progression. You may wish to undertake additional training and become more specialised in your fostering. Our payment system includes a progression framework for carers with more experience.



> "The positive experience we've had of fostering is largely down to our supervising social worker and the support we've received from her, so we wanted to acknowledge that to you."
>
> Coventry foster carers

> "We also have a 24/7 telephone line, staffed by our local team to help with any emergency issues should they arise."
>
> Coventry supervising social worker

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Different types of fostering

Children and young people of all ages and from different backgrounds, may need a foster home for a wide variety of reasons and for shorter or longer periods. In Coventry we need people to become foster carers who have a wide range of different skills and experiences to support them. The type of fostering you could provide will very much depend on you, your lifestyle and the needs of your own family.

Mainstream fostering. This can mean anything from an overnight stay to a period of several months, or in some situations, years. Foster carers provide a temporary place to stay until the child can return home to their own family or a longer-term arrangement can be made. Long-term fostering allows children to stay in a family where they can feel secure, and their needs are met, whilst staying in touch with their own family. Mainstream fostering includes caring for unaccompanied teenagers. As well as the normal tasks of supporting teenagers with their education, self-help and social skills, foster carers working with these young people will need to work with interpreters and learn to overcome everyday language barriers, respect the child's cultural identity and background and upskill your understanding of the country they come from.

Short Stay fostering. Short stay fostering is a type of fostering for a child or children who are either living with foster carers or who are still living at home with their family. Short stay fostering is for a set period, typically ranging from one night or up to 2 weeks.

Parent and child fostering. These foster carers provide a safe, family-based care arrangement to a new or expectant parent (most often the mother) who need some support and guidance around caring for their child.

Out-of-hours fostering. Out-of-hours foster carers care for children and young people who need an immediate foster home outside office hours.

Where these arrangements are needed, out-of-hours foster carers will be contacted by a member of the service. The expectation is that these children will remain with the carer until the next working day although the arrangement may be extended with the carer's agreement. A payment is made to the carers, with the expectation that they will be available for any child who needs to be cared for out-of-hours.

Next Steps fostering. We need to recruit therapeutic foster carers to support children with complex emotional and behavioural needs and require foster carers who can provide skilled, intensive foster care in a family home setting.

If we can provide more information about the specific nature of these schemes, please call our team or come along to one of our events.

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Timi's story...

"We were approved as foster carers on the Next Steps Scheme (Specialist Fostering). We have two birth children and currently we have one child we are fostering.

We do not consider the fostering of children more challenging than raising one's own birth children. It's not that there are no challenges, but that's what parents are built for; to help another generation grow to their full potential. We have had to adapt some of our routines to accommodate our young people and make room to accept them as they were, when they came to us.

Fostering is a great thing to do. We feel we all have enough love and kindness to share. The addition of a child or children to your home brings many advantages; one of the important ones is that every child brings something good into your home, even if they don't know it."



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Your Fostering Journey



Call us



Apply online



Come to a 'Meet the team' event



Initial visit - one of our team visits you at home



Consider whether to continue



Checks and References - we undertake a number of checks and references (such as medical / DBS)



Attend 'Skills to Foster' training course with other potential foster carers



Consider whether to continue



Social Workers Visits - your allocated social worker will visit you around 6-8 times to complete your assessment



Social worker completes your assessment report and shares this with you



Panel - You are invited to come along to the fostering panel who make a recommendation for you about fostering



Agency Decision Maker - makes the decision about approving you as a foster carer

Approx 4 to 6 months to this point

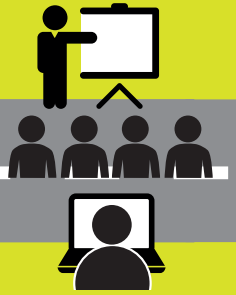
Welcome



You meet your supervising social worker who will provide you with ongoing support and also advice and guidance



First of your placements - you, your supervising social worker, the child's social worker and others work together as a team around the child



Ongoing Training - you continue with training, six core modules to be completed in the first year

You continue your fostering journey with ongoing support and training

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What makes a good foster carer?

Foster carers bring all sorts of different skills and life experiences to fostering and we work with foster carers and the 'team around the child' to match the needs of the children with foster carers.

If you aren't sure if you are eligible, to foster, please contact us.

Coventry City Council foster carers need:

- [x] A spare room
- [x] Time and energy to care for a child (this will be different depending on their age)
- [x] Generally good and stable physical and emotional health
- [x] Some previous childcare experience, through family, work or as a volunteer
- [x] The ability to transport a child or children to different appointments and school (if applicable)
- [x] Spoken and written English (to be able to talk at meetings about the children's needs and help children develop)

What are you good at?

Skills that also help make a good foster carer are

- [ ] Being a good listener
- [ ] Asking for help if you need it
- [ ] Being organised
- [ ] The ability to get on and work with different people
- [ ] Problem solving approach
- [ ] Being understanding of how other people might be feeling
- [ ] Patience
- [ ] And a sense of humour



What happens next?

Thank you for your interest in fostering with Coventry City Council.

We are here to help you consider joining our team.

If you have any further questions, or feel ready to start your fostering journey with us, please:

- Come along to one of our 'meet the team' information sessions.
  Details are on our website www.coventry.gov.uk/fosteringinfoevents
- Call the team on 024 7683 2828
- Email us at pssfostering@coventry.gov.uk

We can then arrange to visit you at home and start your fostering journey!

Time to make a difference. You can be the difference.

Notes

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It's time to make a difference.

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