

## What is fostering?

Foster carers provide stable homes for children who can no longer live with their birth families. Children and young people who come in to the care of Local Authorities are from a wide variety of backgrounds. Ranging from new-born babies to teenagers, they all have different reasons for being in care.

Southampton City Council foster carers offer a warm, caring and safe environment, enabling children and young people to move into the future with confidence.

## What are the different types of fostering?

### Respite

Respite foster carers provide care for a short period of time, be it one weekend a month, or a week or two in the school holidays. Usually it is the same child (or sibling group) that come to stay. Respite can be offered for a number of reasons, whether the main foster carer is going on holiday abroad or to hospital, or to provide a break from a child's challenging behavioural issues. It is always seen as a positive experience for the child however and as something to look forward to.

### Short Term

We usually recommend that new foster carers start with short term fostering so that they become familiar with the processes involved in being a foster carer.

Short term fostering can be anything from an overnight stay to a period of several weeks or months. Short-term foster carers provide a temporary home for a child to stay in until their permanency plan has been agreed.

### Long Term

Long term fostering is a permanent arrangement for a child for whom a decision has been made that long term fostering is the best way for them to achieve permanency.

Children moving into long term foster care will need to be provided with a secure and welcoming home environment where they can live and grow to their full potential. They may have had several short term foster care placements before or been in a children's home so will be looking for stability.

The child will, if in their best interests, maintain contact with their birth family and the foster carer will help facilitate this.

## Parent and Child

'Parent and Child' fostering placements were previously known as 'Mother and Baby'. This type of placement provides an alternative option for Children's Services and the legal system to use, rather than taking a child in to care on their own or placing the family in a residential unit. The stay can be up to 12 weeks.

The foster carer has the child and their birth parent (or parents) living with them in their home, in order to help improve parenting skills. This enables the birth parent and the child to stay together. You will therefore need a spare room large enough to accommodate a bed and cot.

## Step-across

Step-across foster carers will provide a home to children and young people who are looking to move from their children's home to a foster family. There are a number of reasons why children and young people live in a children's home, but they will all have experienced trauma and/or exploitation in some form, and it is very likely they will have had multiple moves throughout their lives. They may still struggle to form trusting relationships and control their emotions. Therefore, they will need foster carers who have experience in supporting or caring for people who require extra help, who are resilient, do not have any other caring or work commitments and are committed to enabling a child or young person to learn to trust and invest in their future positively. As a step-across foster carer, you will engage in the structured supported year with the child and young person. If the child or young person remains in your care after completing the supported year, then this will be under a long term fostering agreement.

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children have left their homes and are claiming asylum in the UK because of war, persecution, or lack of safety in their country of birth. As a Local Authority, we have made a commitment to look after them and to provide a secure and loving place to live.

Many of the children have been separated from their families, either in their homeland or during transit to the UK. As you can imagine, they are often extremely distressed and frightened as a result of the overwhelming experience they have been through. You don't need to be an expert in these sorts of situations; just willing to learn. We will fully support you with specialist training and a supervising social worker to help you provide a stable and welcoming environment.

## Supported Placements

Supported placements provide a safe environment for a young person aged 16-21 (or 24 if remaining in higher education) as they prepare to leave the care of the Local Authority. A stable home setting is needed to enable the young person to continue education, or actively seek training and employment. You will help them learn about independent living and build on their life skills.

## Emergency Placements

The Emergency Placements Scheme requires specific foster carers for children who need to be cared for in a crisis. You will need to be available to take in a child up until 10pm at night. Due to the sensitive nature of this type of placement, there should be no other children in the home aged under ten years. The child will remain in your care for 5 to 10 days. Emergency Placement foster carers will receive an enhanced level of training and support, together with a generous allowance. You will need to demonstrate relevant childcare experience before applying to be part of this scheme.

## In summary

Type of Fostering	Length of Time
Respite	Can be ad hoc, one weekend a month, or longer in school holidays
Short Term	From an overnight stay to several weeks or months, up to two years
Long Term	Over two years, sometimes until adulthood
Parent and Child	Up to 12 weeks
Step-across	52 weeks
UASC	Variable
Supported Placements	Usually several months or years
Emergency Placements	5 to 10 days

## Want to find out more?

Contact us:

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