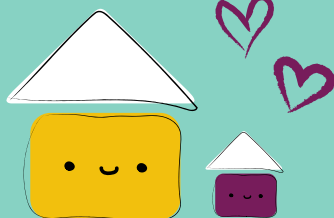


Fostering Information Guide



Foster
for Solihull



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Thank you for choosing to find out more about fostering with us. Fostering is a big decision for any family to make, but we're confident that you'll find it incredibly rewarding. Whether you've been considering fostering for a long time or this is your first time learning more about foster care, we'd love to hear from you.

Our fostering information guide is designed to give you an insight into life as a foster carer with Solihull Council, and help you make the best decision for you and your family.

You'll learn more about how your skills and experiences can help Solihull children grow up feeling safe, supported and able to achieve their full potential in life.

You can also find out more by contacting the Foster for Solihull team today:

Visit: fosterforsolihull.co.uk

Call: 0121 788 4474

Email: fosteringrecruitment@solihull.gov.uk

You can also follow us on social media and hear from our amazing community of foster carers:

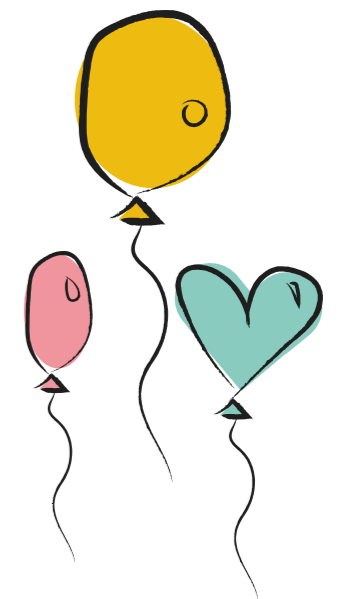
Facebook: [@solihullcouncilfostering](https://www.facebook.com/solihullcouncilfostering)

Instagram: [@foster_for_solihull](https://www.instagram.com/foster_for_solihull)

Twitter: [@SolihullFoster](https://twitter.com/SolihullFoster)

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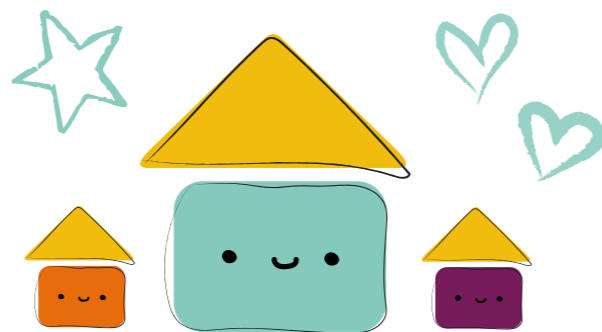
About us

Foster for Solihull is proud to be part of Children's Services at Solihull Council, supporting children and young people in foster care across the local area. We are a not for profit organisation.

We believe that all of Solihull's children and young people should grow up with a sense of belonging. We want them all to grow up feeling safe, supported and part of a family. We can't do this alone.

We're always looking to expand our community of fostering families from across the West Midlands to help children and young people thrive.

We currently work with a diverse and wonderful community of fostering families who would love you to join us. Hear about why they chose to foster with us by visiting our website: fosterforsolihull.co.uk



We believe that all Solihull's children should grow up with a sense of belonging. All children and young people should grow up feeling safe, supported and appreciated.

Anna Stephens, Head of Service for Fostering, Adoption and Residential Children's Homes

What do foster carers do?

Foster carers provide essential support and a sense of belonging for children and young people who can no longer be cared for by their birth parents.

Solihull Council works in a number of ways with families who are experiencing difficulties. Our main aim is to work with families to help them to stay together.

However, sometimes children need to be placed in temporary foster care to help children and young people through a difficult period in their lives.

Children will often return home once the problems that caused them to come into foster care have been resolved. Others however may stay in long-term foster care until they are adopted, or able to move onto independence as an adult.

Children enter foster care for a wide variety of reasons. They all have different life experiences and goals for the future. Every child who needs looking after has their own story, and needs a loving, supportive home where they can feel safe.

As a foster carer you will provide a safe, healthy and nurturing home for a child or young person, on a temporary or longer term basis. You will be required to work alongside social workers, birth families and care professionals to care for children across the local area. You will also support them with their educational needs and maintain a close connection with the child's school.

From the school run to the bedtime routine, you'll be acting as the primary caregiver for a child in your care. That means taking part in everyday activities with them and providing opportunities, activities and experiences for them to enjoy. Depending on the age of the child and their hobbies, this could include anything from football practice to supporting a child with their homework.

Just like our foster carers, all young people are unique and may need specific support to help them thrive.

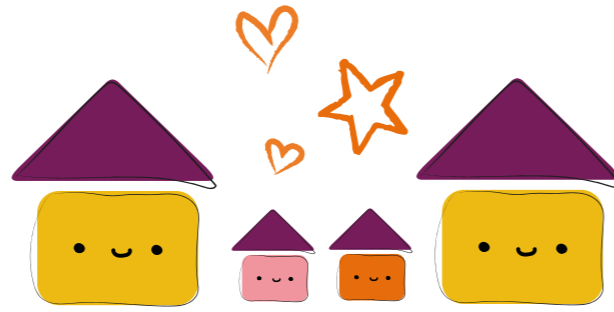


Fostering is about giving love and security to children who come into our home. If you've got place in your heart and your home, think about fostering.

Nadia, Solihull foster carer



Can I foster?



Foster carers come from all walks of life, and we are proud to work with our diverse community of carers to support young people in Solihull.

Fostering is often described as the most rewarding and challenging thing anyone can do. Therefore, Foster for Solihull needs foster carers who are resilient and positive in their outlook, and are able to do the very best for the children they are looking after.

Here are the key values and responsibilities for foster carers - is this you?

- ☆ You can provide a safe, healthy, welcoming and nurturing home for a child or young person
- ☆ You enjoy working with children and young people and supporting them with their emotional needs
- ☆ You value diversity and ensure children have a positive understanding of their background, religions and culture
- ☆ You understand other people's points of view and feelings, and are sensitive and respectful to others
- ☆ You have the ability to stand back from situations, and be flexible in resolving them

- ☆ Willing to attend regular training sessions and professional development plans
- ☆ Excellent communication skills
- ☆ Time to commit to looking after a vulnerable child or young person. If already working, you must be able to work flexibly around the child's needs

Alongside the key values all our foster carers have, there are key minimum requirements to ensure you can progress as a Solihull foster carer:

- ☆ You must have a spare bedroom in your home
- ☆ Be aged 21 or over
- ☆ Live within 20 miles of Solihull Council boundary or be able to support the transport requirements for a child in your care
- ☆ Have a basic level of English in order to communicate successfully with our teams and the professionals you will be working with.

If you would like to learn more about the eligibility criteria for fostering with Solihull Council, our team would be happy to help. Book a call back at a time that suits you: fosterforsolihull.co.uk/book

Types of foster care

There are several different types of fostering, all of which support children, young people and their families. Depending on the needs of the child, children can live with fostering families on a short-term or long-term basis.

Short-term foster care

Short-term foster carers will look after a child until decisions are made for their future, ranging from an overnight stay to a period up to 2 years. A short-term foster carer gives young people in unsettled situations the security they need at the time they need it most.

Long-term foster care

Children who cannot return to their birth families may move into long-term foster care, if this is deemed the right decision for the child and their future. Foster carers who care for children on a long-term basis will provide a safe and loving home for children until they reach adulthood.

Unlike adoption, the legal responsibility for the child or young person will remain with the local authority, and the child may still have contact with their birth parents. A key responsibility for all long-term carers is supporting this contact, with the help of our fostering team.

Emergency foster care

Some children need to be looked after with very short notice, at any time of day or night. Emergency foster carers offer essential flexibility and support to young people when they need it most, with very little planning or preparation.

Carers who foster on an emergency basis will look after the child until further plans are made for their future.

Respite foster care

Respite foster carers provide essential support over short periods to birth families and other foster carers on a part-time basis. Often looking after children on evenings, weekends and during school holidays for up to 2 weeks at a time, respite carers give children in care some time away from their home so they can have new experiences with a carer they know and trust.

This type of fostering is ideal for those who want to foster but are unable to commit to a long-term match due to limited free time. It is flexible, meaning you can offer one-off emergency home matches or a regular arrangement where you support a child and foster family on an ongoing basis.

You will have contact with the foster carer and be fully informed about the individual child's needs.



Short breaks foster care

Short breaks foster carers offer regular, planned and ongoing support to children who have a disability and their families. This can be over weekends or during school holidays on a part-time basis.

A child might stay with a short breaks carer for one or two nights a month.

Our short breaks carers often build a strong relationship with a young person and their family over many years and become part of the extended family.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

This specialised type of fostering provides care to refugee and unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC).

Speaking little or no English, many of these children and young people arrive in the UK traumatised and disorientated. They may have travelled for many months before arriving here, often fleeing war and persecution.

A great deal of sensitivity, patience and understanding is required from UASC foster carers. Their role is to prepare the youngsters who are often in their mid to late teens, for independent living, in addition to supporting their emotional and cultural needs.

The fostering team provides specialist training and support for this type of fostering in order to equip carers with skills to help the young people settle and integrate.

“All the unaccompanied asylum seeking children I’ve looked after have been kind and considerate young people who are very conscientious and keen to get a good education. I try my hardest to empathise with what they have been through and put them at ease.”

- Phil, Solihull foster carer

Sibling groups

Foster for Solihull makes every effort to keep siblings together. If you have a large bedroom, or 2+ spare bedrooms in your home, you can give siblings the security and comfort of staying together as they grow up.



Teenagers

Teenagers coming into care are often frightened, insecure and confused. They need families who are empathetic, resilient, caring and open minded.

Sometimes, people have concerns that fostering teenagers would be too challenging. Although the teenage years can be tough, fostering teenagers is often less difficult than caring for younger children as they are more independent.

“I’m always very happy to look after groups of siblings and am currently caring for 3 children from the same family. The children have been through so much already that it would be heartbreaking for them to have to be separated from each other. This way they have each other to lean on.”

- Lorraine, Solihull foster carer

Not sure which path is right for you?

Have a chat with one of our fostering advisers to discuss which type of foster care is best for you and your family.

You can book your call here:
fosterforsolihull.co.uk/book





All they want is for someone to care for them and provide them with a nice home environment. I always give them a key to my home, no matter what circumstances they have come to me in. This shows them that I trust them and they respect me for that, which gets us off to a good start.

Susan, Solihull foster carer

Specialist foster care

Every young person is different, and every child enters care with unique life experiences and needs, some of which may require specialist care.

Specialist foster carers receive additional training and support, alongside an enhanced skills fee payment. To learn more about our financial support offer visit our website:

fosterforsolihull.co.uk/financial-support

★ **Parent and child fostering**

In parent and child fostering matches, birth parents are matched alongside their child/children in a foster carer's home. Foster carers will work closely with the birth parent and assist them in caring for their child/children.

★ **PACE/therapeutic fostering**

Foster carers with previous experience caring for children can receive specialist training to children with additional needs who need looking after, who may need extra support from our therapeutic team.

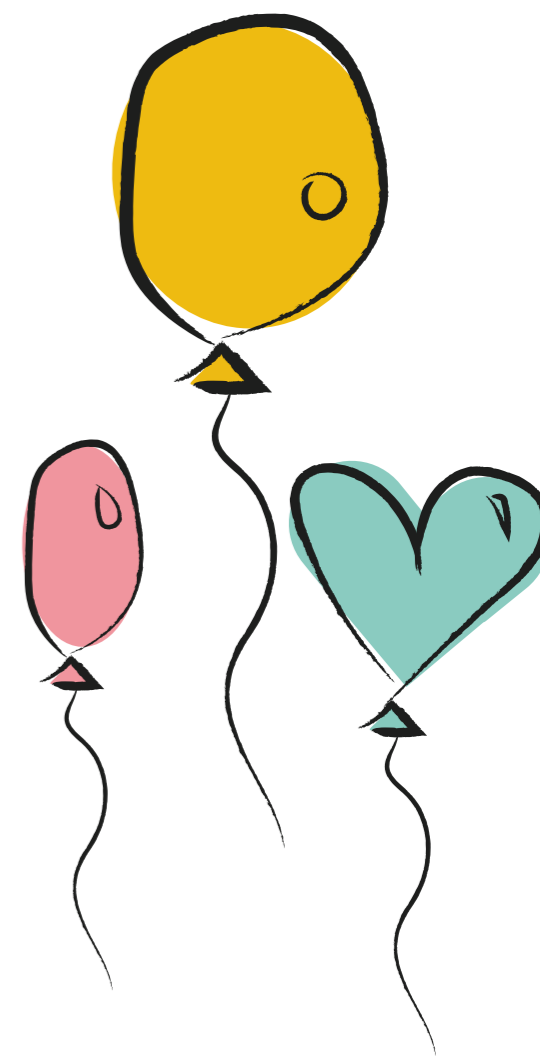
★ **Remand fostering**

Some children may enter the care of the local authority after being placed in custody, or as part of their bail conditions. They require a safe home to support them.

★ **Step down fostering**

This is a type of foster care where children and young people who have previously been placed in secure accommodation, or in a Residential provision, are rehabilitated back to living within a family environment. A foster carer can help to make this transition easier.

For more information about specialist foster care options, please speak to our team: fosterforsolihull.co.uk/book



Benefits at a glance

What are the benefits of fostering with Solihull Council? Apart from working with young people, our current carers love our community spirit, great financial rewards and career development opportunities.

Competitive fees and allowances

At Foster for Solihull, we want you to feel supported. That's why we provide financial

support to all our foster carers for the amazing work they do. We pay our foster carers £445 per week on average. The actual amount will vary based on your skills level and the ages of the children you look after. You'll also benefit from tax relief and payments to cover additional expenses such as birthdays and cultural holidays, including Christmas.

To learn more about all our fees and allowances visit our website:

www.fosterforsolihull.co.uk/financial-support

Make a difference to a child's life

You'll help local children, keeping them near the places and people they know and in the community they've grown up in. This has a huge effect helping

them maintain a sense of stability and consistency in their lives at a time when they may be experiencing some upheaval.

Professional support 24/7

The best foster carers are those who feel supported. That's why we provide 24/7 support to all our carers with a dedicated out of hours fostering support line run by experienced and knowledgeable members of staff who can help you with any issues you may have. Right from the start, you will be assigned a dedicated social worker who will work with you and your family supporting you every step of the way. We really will be just a phone call away when you need us.

You will give back to your local community

By choosing to foster with Solihull you'll give back to your local area. Fostering creates a better future for all of the community by ensuring the well-being of some of its most vulnerable children. We're not for profit, which means all the funds we have go straight into improving the lives of local children.



Comprehensive training and development

You'll develop a range of skills, building on your natural abilities as a carer and learning how to advocate for children in your care. We support your learning with a comprehensive range of training opportunities, including your initial Skills To Foster training.

Engaged and supportive community

As a foster carer, you're never alone. Our community of foster carers meet up regularly to make new friends and share useful tips and advice. On a national scale, all our carers gain access to The Fostering Network, the UK's leading fostering charity.

Learn more about why carers across the West Midlands chose to foster with Foster for Solihull. Book a call back at a time that suits you: fosterforsolihull.co.uk/book



24/7 support for fostering families

Professional support 24/7

The best foster carers are those who feel supported. That's why we provide 24/7 support to all our carers with a dedicated out of hours fostering support line run by experienced and knowledgeable members of staff who can help you with any issues you may have.

Your own supervising social worker

All our foster carers benefit from their own allocated supervising social worker, based here in Solihull. You will have regular one to one support sessions with your own supervising social worker and build a fantastic relationship. As a Foster for Solihull foster carer, you will also have access to other related support services, such as a Children in Care nurse or educational support services.

Excellent matching process

Every foster carer is unique, just like our children who are in care. That's why our matching process is so important. We will spend time with you, your family and the children in our care to make sure every child and foster carer is happy.

Personal development plan based around you

All carers receive a personal development plan, with the option to receive additional skills fee payments for your continued dedication to developing your skills. We produce a quarterly training brochure that contains loads of training opportunities, to help you provide the best care in any situation. These are delivered online or in person, to fit around your busy schedule.

A friendly buddy to help you settle into your new role

You may be allocated an experienced foster carer as a 'buddy', who will give support and advice on an informal basis during your first year as a foster carer and beyond. They'll also help you make new friends in our community and assist you with understanding and adapting to your new role.



Support for children who foster

Becoming a fostering family can impact other children living in your home, including birth children. This is why your Supervising Social Worker offers additional support to 'children who foster' when they need it.

You will also work with two fostering support workers, who offer additional one-to-one support for your children if needed, as well as celebrating the contribution that birth or adopted children make to your fostering household by holding celebration events every October.

Local support groups held monthly

There's nothing like meeting other people in your shoes so we run a range of support groups for all our foster carers in person and virtually so we adopt a hybrid approach in order to suit a wider variety of carers. We have sessions both in the mornings and afternoons alternatively to try to accommodate carers with different commitments so all can join! We also have many other social events throughout the year.

Rewards and recognition

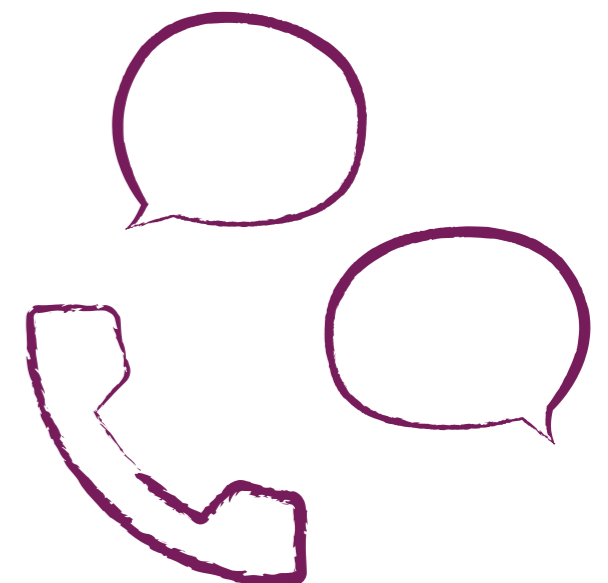
We foster a sense of belonging for all carers and young people here in Solihull and our foster carers are a crucial part of our team. We host annual celebration

and awards events throughout the year for our foster carers and the young people they support.

All of these events recognise and celebrate the whole fostering family, including other children in the household, supportive relatives and the social work teams.

“We've had fantastic support from social workers and other professionals... we've exchanged numbers with other local foster carers too”

- Michelle, Solihull foster carer



Financial support

Although money may not be your first consideration when it comes to fostering, money does matter when it comes to your family's finances.

That's why we pay our foster carers an average of **£445** per week as a thank you for their hard work and dedication to supporting children and young people in our community. This is equivalent to **£1,928** per month, which is above the national average.

This amount you are paid differs depending on your experience, the number of children you are caring for, their ages and whether you foster on a full-time or part-time basis.

You may also be eligible for generous tax allowances and benefits, depending on your personal circumstances and if you work and foster at the same time.

We value the hard work, time and dedication that our foster carers give day-in, day-out. That means that we'll support you so you can fully enjoy this rewarding role. We would never want a person's financial situation to be a barrier to them helping Solihull's children.

We are committed to providing a competitive weekly allowance to enable you to focus your attention on the child in your care, making them feel cherished and valued and giving them the chance to thrive.

We pay allowances weekly to give you control over your budget and easily respond to life's everyday needs. These allowances break down into a skills-level based payment, and an allowance for the child in your care. We also include one-off payments to get a home match ready, such as our set up grant. This provides up to £500 so you can buy equipment that's essential to the role, whether that's furniture, a pushchair or equipment needed for certain ages of children.

We also know that fostering requires a lot of travel to school, clubs and birth family visits. We'll assist with expenses by paying 40p per mile for mileage over 60 miles per week.

We also want you to be able to celebrate a child in your care, which is why we offer up to £882.45 a year in allowance for birthdays and cultural festivals such as Christmas.

You can learn more about our fostering payments in our rates sheet, available to download from our website: fosterforsolihull.co.uk/financial-support

*Please note, our monthly equivalents are based on weekly allowances converted to annual equivalent. Fostering fees are paid on a weekly basis and monthly equivalencies are for illustrative purposes only.

We've been fostering now for over 31 years, and it's been the most enjoyable experience sharing our lives with young people who need care and support.

Sue, Solihull foster carer



Comprehensive training on your doorstep

We have an extensive, locally delivered, quality training package for our new and approved foster carers. If you are interested in developing existing skills (or gaining new ones), we offer our carers a comprehensive programme of training support, helping you become the best foster carer you can be.

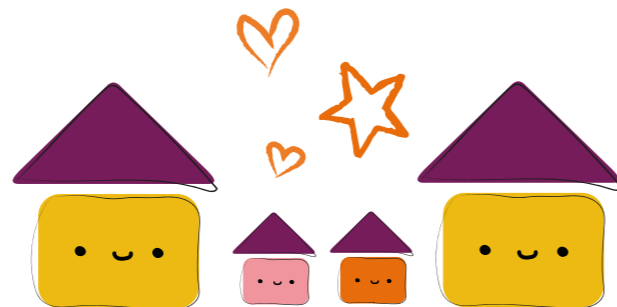
Whether you've worked with children in a professional capacity before or not, we're here to help. Foster for Solihull offers extensive and easy to understand training to help you grow as a carer from day one, led by experts who are here to help you all the way.

We understand that foster carers need a wide range of training opportunities, and we're proud to offer a wide range of local training, including First Aid and Safeguarding, as well as therapeutic courses like Fostering Resilience and the Solihull Approach to Foster Carers.

That's not all! At Foster for Solihull, our foster carers and social workers train together to share knowledge, nurture relationships and build a shared understanding of the issues and challenges inherent in fostering.

“As Solihull foster carers, we have ongoing, quality training and regular support from our supervising social worker.”

- Angela, Solihull foster carer



How to become a foster carer

So what is the application process like at Foster for Solihull? Our personalised application process usually takes an average of 5 months, though this can be longer or shorter depending on your personal circumstances and how fast you would like to progress. Our approval process is split into 6 stages and our team will support you each step of the way.

1

The first step of the process is to speak with one of our fostering advisers who will explain more about the types of fostering, the application process and learn a little bit about you. We'll also carry out some basic background checks - these are routine checks and shouldn't be anything to worry about. They will then book a home appointment with one of our social workers. This is to find out more about you, make sure your home is suitable, and tell you more about fostering with us.

This is also a good opportunity to discuss what type of fostering may be best for you.

2

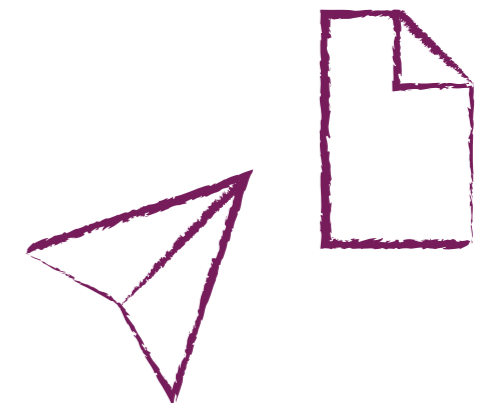
You will then be invited to take part in our pre-approval training.

During the training, we will be asking you to think about your motives, ideas and feelings about fostering and what you are able to offer as individuals and families. We will ask you to consider the needs of children who experience prejudice and discrimination in our society.

You will also be given more information about fostering so that you can explore the possible impact on you and your family.

3

When you complete the Pre-Approval training, you will be asked to complete a fostering application form. This form notifies us of your wish to progress to a full assessment.



4

You will then be allocated an assessing social worker. The worker's role is to get to know you and your family, to have further discussions with you about fostering and for you to explore the type of fostering you would like to be considered for.

All members of your household will be involved in the assessment process, which is divided into two stages.

You will need to satisfactorily complete Stage 1 in order to move onto the more in depth Stage 2 of the assessment process. The assessment will include various interviews and references with family, friends and employers, from which the social worker will then produce a report to be presented to the fostering panel.

5

The Fostering Panel is made up of a number of professionals and other people with experience of fostering, who will look at your application to make sure it is robust and indicates that you will be a good foster carer.

The Panel will make a recommendation that you become a foster carer, which will be endorsed by a member of staff known as the Agency Decision Maker. You will then be an approved foster carer and can start fostering!

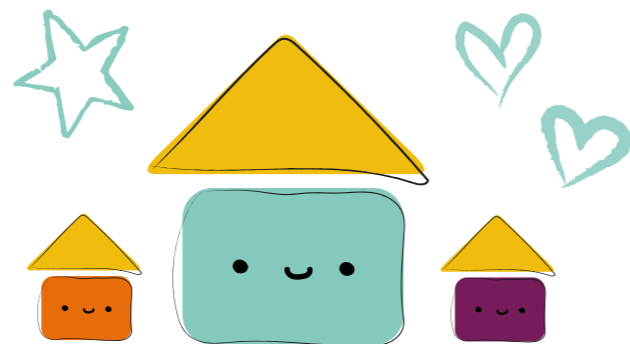
6

We're so happy you're joining the Foster for Solihull family!

As an approved foster carer for us, how quickly you have a child or young person matched with you will depend on the category of children you are approved to care for. Before a child or young person is matched with you, we will visit your home to go through the necessary policies, procedures and paperwork and establish whether or not you have all the necessary equipment.

As a newly approved foster carer, you'll also receive lots of support from our community of foster carers, social workers and professionals to help you settle into your new role.

Speak to our team to learn more about our support: fosterforsolihull.co.uk/book



I thought about being a foster carer for many years, then finally in 2019 I decided to apply. It's honestly the best thing we've ever done, I'm so glad we did it.

Lynn, Solihull foster carer

Transfer to us

Do you already foster? Joining Foster for Solihull is easier than you think!

Every week we receive enquiries from people just like you thinking about transferring over to Foster for Solihull. There are many reasons why people choose to transfer to Foster for Solihull including:

- ★ We match children in-house first, before consulting other fostering agencies.
- ★ As part of Solihull Council, we always look to our own team of foster carers first to provide home matches for children and young people.
- ★ This means that our foster carers are more likely to get regular children matched with them within their preferred age range.
- ★ Local experienced support and training available 24/7, 365 days a year.
- ★ We are dedicated to keeping our foster carers supported and trained to be able to provide the best possible safe, nurturing care for children and young people from Solihull.

- ★ Our current foster carers love being part of a fostering community that rallies together and understands that when things go wrong, there is always somebody available to help.
- ★ As a Foster for Solihull carer, you will also receive access to other support services for the children in your care, including a Children in Care nurse and educational support services.
- ★ As an experienced carer you will also receive competitive fees and allowances in recognition of your skills and experience.



You can transfer to Foster for Solihull in 4 easy steps:

- ★ Ring Fostering Recruitment on **0121 788 4474**
- ★ We will visit you at home to discuss your situation and needs
- ★ We will allocate a social worker to complete an assessment and follow the Fostering Network Transfer Protocol. We'll also invite you to come along to any training or meet up events that you might find useful
- ★ We will take your report to Panel for recommendation and approval

You are part of the team! You will be allocated your own supervising social worker.

Learn more about transferring to Foster for Solihull on our website: fosterforsolihull.co.uk/transfer



Begin your fostering journey

We hope you've found this information guide useful and has inspired you to start fostering with us.

Foster carers from across Solihull love making a difference to children and young people and seeing them grow into happy, successful adults. Whether you foster on a full-time or part-time basis, you will help young people in a very meaningful way to go on and achieve their potential in life.

We would love to invite you to speak to a member of our team and learn more about how fostering could work for you and your family. You can book a call back via our website at a time that suits you: fosterforsolihull.co.uk/book

You can also get in touch with us via telephone, our website and social media:

Visit: fosterforsolihull.co.uk

Call: 0121 788 4474

Email: fosteringrecruitment@solihull.gov.uk

You can also Follow us on social media and hear from our amazing community of foster carers:

Facebook: [@solihullcouncilfostering](https://www.facebook.com/solihullcouncilfostering)

Instagram: [@foster_for_solihull](https://www.instagram.com/foster_for_solihull)

Twitter: [@SolihullFoster](https://twitter.com/SolihullFoster)



Changing lives, together.

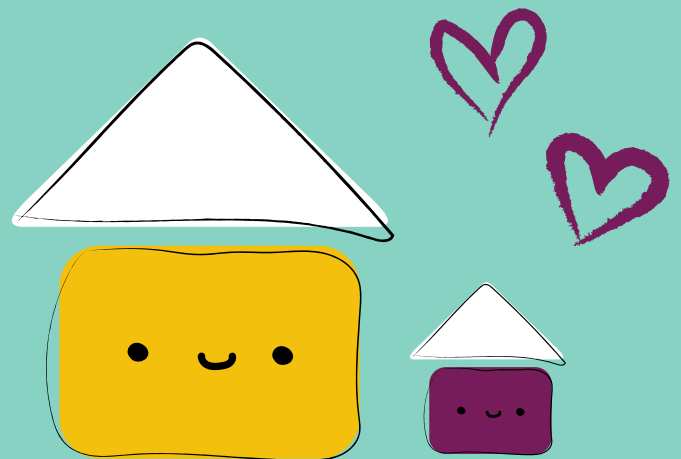
We believe that all Solihull's children and young people should grow up with the care, love, support and sense of belonging they need to be safe, healthy and achieve their potential.

Can you help us?

Visit: fosterforsolihull.co.uk

Call: 0121 788 4474

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