



Fostering

With Brighton & Hove City Council

» Make a difference,
change a future

www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk



Brighton & Hove
City Council



**“I’m giving
children their
childhood
back.”**

**“I’m helping
young people to
find their place
in the world.”**



**“I’m doing
something truly
worthwhile
every single
day.”**



All quotes and case studies are the genuine words and experiences of our foster carers. To protect the anonymity of our foster carers, children and young people, all imagery is stock imagery.

Welcome

» from the Brighton & Hove Fostering Team

Our friendly fostering team are here to support you at every step of your journey

Becoming a **foster carer** is a big decision and we know that simply getting in touch to enquire about the process can be a big step. Don't worry if you have thought about fostering for some time and are still unsure - many of our carers considered taking the first step for years before applying. If the time is not quite right for you, you can still help to grow our community by passing this information booklet onto someone else who might like to learn more.

Our friendly fostering team are here to support you at every step. From providing answers to **your questions** and giving the best advice, to supporting you through the assessment process and beyond, we will do **everything** we can to help and guide you.

We know that although the thought of helping children and young people is exciting, it can feel daunting too. Together, we will work with you to discover not just whether fostering is right for you, but also how it can be a life-changing experience for you, your family and the children who need you.

Our aim is to make sure all our foster carers are fully informed and well trained so that they can do their very best for the children they care for.

This is your chance to find out how you can make a difference to the most vulnerable children and young people in Brighton & Hove.



» **Thank you**
for taking the first step



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Fostering is looking after someone else's child or children when they can't live with their birth family.

What is » fostering?

Fostering is looking after someone else's child or children when they can't live with their birth family. This can be for a day or two, a few months, or many years. Sometimes a child will return home to live with their family, they may be adopted, or be fostered until they reach adulthood.

Fostered children may have suffered from neglect and/or abuse and need a stable loving home where they can grow and thrive. Every child's story is different, but they will all have had a difficult start in life and have faced loss and separation from their birth family.

Children and young people who need foster care range from newborn up to the age of 18. Many are part of a sibling group, and all will come from a variety of geographical areas, and a wide range of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Like the children they look after, foster carers come from all sorts of different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and age groups too. What our carers have in common is a genuine desire to support children and young people through a difficult time in their lives and to give them the best future possible.

» Types of fostering



» SHORT TERM

When a child first comes into care and their long-term future is uncertain, they will be fostered in a short-term placement. This placement could last from a few days to several years whilst decisions are being made and agreed upon. As a short-term foster carer, you can still provide a child with a stable and loving home.

» LONG TERM

Some children cannot return to their birth family and may be placed in long term foster care until they are ready to live independently. A family home can provide the security and stability that a child needs to thrive and reach their full potential.



» PARENT AND CHILD

Parent and child placements provide a home for both the parent and their child. The foster carer will teach parenting skills, encourage the parental bond and ensure the child is safe and cared for during an assessment period. The aim is for the parent and child to move on to live independently after a few months.



» RESPITE

Some children need to be looked after for a short period on a regular basis. This could be for as little as one weekend per month or for a holiday. Respite care can give parents or other foster carers a break and can prevent a breakdown in the family. Some foster carers offer respite care in addition to other short- and long-term placements whilst others prefer to offer respite care only.



» FOSTERING PLUS

Fostering Plus is a unique opportunity to support a young person's transition from residential care back into a family home environment, or to prevent them from being placed into residential care at all. We provide a comprehensive package of focused training and specialist support to help fostering plus carers care for young people with complex needs. Positive outcomes are often seen as a result of this type of fostering and it can be extremely rewarding.



» FOSTERING UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING YOUNG PEOPLE

Some foster carers choose to specialise in caring for children and young people who have been separated from their families, either in their own country or during transit to the UK. They are often distressed and frightened because of the overwhelming experience they have been through and need help to learn the skills required to successfully build a new life in the UK.



» SUPPORTED LODGINGS

Supported lodgings carers provide young people (care leavers 18+) with emotional support and help them to learn the everyday, practical skills they need for adult life. To be a supported lodgings carer you must like and respect young people, understand some of the issues they may face, and have the space and flexibility to offer advice in a safe and supportive environment. More information on page 20.





“Don’t be put off thinking you’re not perfect. Nobody is perfect. If you haven’t had some of these challenges in your past, how can you be expected to relate to children who are having a difficult time.”

What makes a » good foster carer?

We don’t expect any person, any couple, or any family to be perfect.

The role of a foster carer is to provide a stable source of support, so life experience, insight, stamina and fortitude can be a great asset. Foster carers need moral strength and toughness of spirit not a flawless past. Foster care is a career choice that we feel warrants the same sense of status and value as other professional roles.

» **Brighton & Hove City Council foster carers need:**

- ✓ A spare bedroom
- ✓ Significant childcare experience, through family, work, or as a volunteer
- ✓ To live within a 25-mile radius of the city
- ✓ To enjoy caring for children
- ✓ Time and energy to put a child’s need first
- ✓ Good physical and emotional health

» **Great foster carers should be able to demonstrate;**

- ✓ Patience and understanding
- ✓ A strong and positive support network
- ✓ An ability to ask for help and take advice on board when needed
- ✓ An ability to listen to and communicate with children to meet their needs
- ✓ Flexibility, adaptability and resilience
- ✓ An ability to work in partnership with professionals and families
- ✓ An understanding of racism and discrimination
- ✓ That they can meet a child’s racial, linguistic, cultural and religious needs
- ✓ A sense of humour

How we will » look after you

Children and young people are at the heart of our community. They are wrapped in the love, care and dedication of both our team, and our foster carers, who do everything possible to ensure they are supported to thrive. We are stronger as a community and our team are committed to continually ensuring our foster carers have the support they require. Here are just some of the ways we look after each other.

Generous allowance

You will receive a weekly payment that consists of two parts. A professional fee for yourself and a day to day living allowance for the child or young person in your care (more information on page 12).

Ongoing training

We provide ongoing mandatory training as well as a range of other courses that are tailored to foster carer's needs. We are committed to supporting the ongoing learning and development of all our foster carers to help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to feel confident in their role.

Access to Charms

Charms is an easy to use online recording and case management system that enables foster carers to log and access vital information in a safe and secure way. Our team will support you to use this system.

Supervising Social Workers

Every foster carer has their own Supervising Social Worker who will provide one to one advice and support.

Out of hours service

Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Fostering Support Team

Our Fostering Support Officers are a group of fun, friendly and highly skilled professionals who work directly with the children and young people in our care. The team provide after school, weekend and school holiday activities and events for both foster children and the birth children of foster carers.

Brighton and Hove Foster Care Association (BHFA)

An independent voluntary group run by foster carers for foster carers.

Buddy scheme

We will match new foster carers with experienced foster carers to ensure their first placements are a positive experience. The scheme has been a huge success with close friendships often established along the way (more information on page 17).

Support groups

We run local local face-to-face and online support groups for all types of fostering. The groups are a great way for foster carers in similar circumstances to come together, support each other and learn from one another.

Wellbeing sessions

The wellbeing of our foster carers is just as important to us as the wellbeing of our children. Sessions are themed according to different aspects of wellbeing, and they include activities such as pebble painting, jewellery making, crafts, countryside walks and mindfulness/relaxation techniques.

Social activities and events

Throughout the year we host activities and events such as our annual summer BBQ, Christmas party, fostering community walk and foster carer's conference.

Equality, diversity » and inclusion

It is vital that equality, diversity and inclusion are central to our fostering community. Class, gender, marital status, race, sex, age, faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability should never prevent you from getting in touch and will never prevent your application from progressing. We are proud of our diverse fostering community, which includes children and foster carers from all walks of life.

Children and young people have the right to grow up understanding their roots, culture and identity

It is crucial that children and young people are valued for their differences and encouraged to reach their full potential. In Brighton & Hove, there is a shortage of foster carers with the same cultural or ethnic background as the children coming into care.

Matching children with foster carers who share the same background can often help them to develop a better sense of their history and identity and to feel a better sense of pride and achievement.

In Brighton & Hove, we are proud to have many LGBTQ+ foster families

Foster carers who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, non-binary or trans are a vital part of our fostering community. We believe that it's your personal qualities and what you can offer that make you a great foster carer; as long as you're compassionate and can provide a stable environment for a child or young person, you will have what it takes.

» **“We need more Black, Asian and Global Majority carers to step forward. The children need our input and expertise from experiences of race and racism, through to the simple things like skin and hair care. Being a foster carer really is an amazing job.”**



» **“I feel my faith helps me to cope with the demands of modern life. My morals and values come from a stable home and loving parents who have supported me through the various challenges in my life. It is my intention to provide the same level of support and guidance to my foster children.”**



Above all, we're looking for caring, kind people who can provide a stable home – and your experience could be of valuable help to children who are working out their own identity or who've encountered discrimination and prejudice.

We will equip you with the training and support you need to make a difference

Staff and foster carers are provided with learning and development opportunities to ensure a robust understanding of equality issues, and how to appropriately address issues of discrimination. In addition to our ongoing package of training and support, we also offer;

- ✓ **A Cultural Identity Support Group, open to all carers.**
- ✓ **Mandatory training on caring for Black, Asian, and Global Majority children.**
- ✓ **Plenty of literature, resources and support to help carers meet the specific needs of all children and young people in their care.**
- ✓ **The opportunity to buddy up with an experienced foster carer.**
- ✓ **Membership of New Family Social, a UK charity led by LGBTQ+ adopters and foster carers.**
- ✓ **Specific training and an informed support group for carers looking after young refugees.**

Brighton & Hove City Council have pledged to become an anti racist council. The fostering team are committed to ensuring we fulfil this pledge.

Transferring to us from an » agency or other local authority

If you are already a foster carer for an agency or other local authority, your transfer journey will typically take 4-5 months depending on how long you have been fostering.

We are very experienced in supporting carers to transfer to Brighton and Hove City Council. We understand that it is a big decision, and we work hard to make sure it has as little impact on you and your current fostering commitments as possible.

» 1. Get in touch

Contact us to discuss your current situation and to find out more about what our team can offer you.

» 2. Home visit

We will meet with you at your home to discuss your experience in more detail.

» 3. Application

If you are happy to proceed, you will complete an application form and inform your agency/local authority of your 'intent to transfer'. This will not impact your current fostering circumstances and the agency/local authority will be used to the process. Until you are approved to foster with Brighton & Hove City Council, you will remain fostering for your current agency/local authority.

» 4. Assessment

An Assessing Social Worker will meet with you to complete a transfer assessment. If your Form F was completed in the last five years, we will do an update addendum alongside any necessary updates to your stage 1 checks and references. The types of checks and references required will depend on how long you have been fostering.

» 5. Online panel

Once you have attended panel and a recommendation has been made, you will be required to give 28 days' written notice to your agency/local authority.

» 6. Approval

Once 28 days have passed you are formally approved as a Brighton & Hove foster carer. Payments and support will have been set up prior to your approval.

Payments » and rewards

You will be paid a weekly fostering allowance

Foster carers perform an essential role, so whilst money should not be a primary motivation, it is right that you are properly remunerated for the hard work and care you will provide. You will have a huge effect on children's lives, helping them to improve their self-esteem, make better choices and go on to have a safer and happier future.

The Brighton & Hove payment scheme is simple, fair, and easy to understand. It is competitive alongside local independent fostering agencies and other local authorities, and it recognises the complex task of fostering.

Your weekly payment will consist of two parts; a professional fee for yourself

and a day to day living allowance for the child.

Professional fee: Fee payments are made on top of the allowance to recognise a foster carers' time, skill, and experience.

Living allowance: Foster carers receive an allowance to cover the cost of caring for a fostered child. The allowance depends on the type of fostering you do and the age of the young person in your care.

Foster carers are considered self-employed and are subject to special tax rules. This means they can be exempt from paying tax on all or most of their fostering income, depending on certain factors. Our team will talk to you about tax rules for foster carers and signpost you to more information.

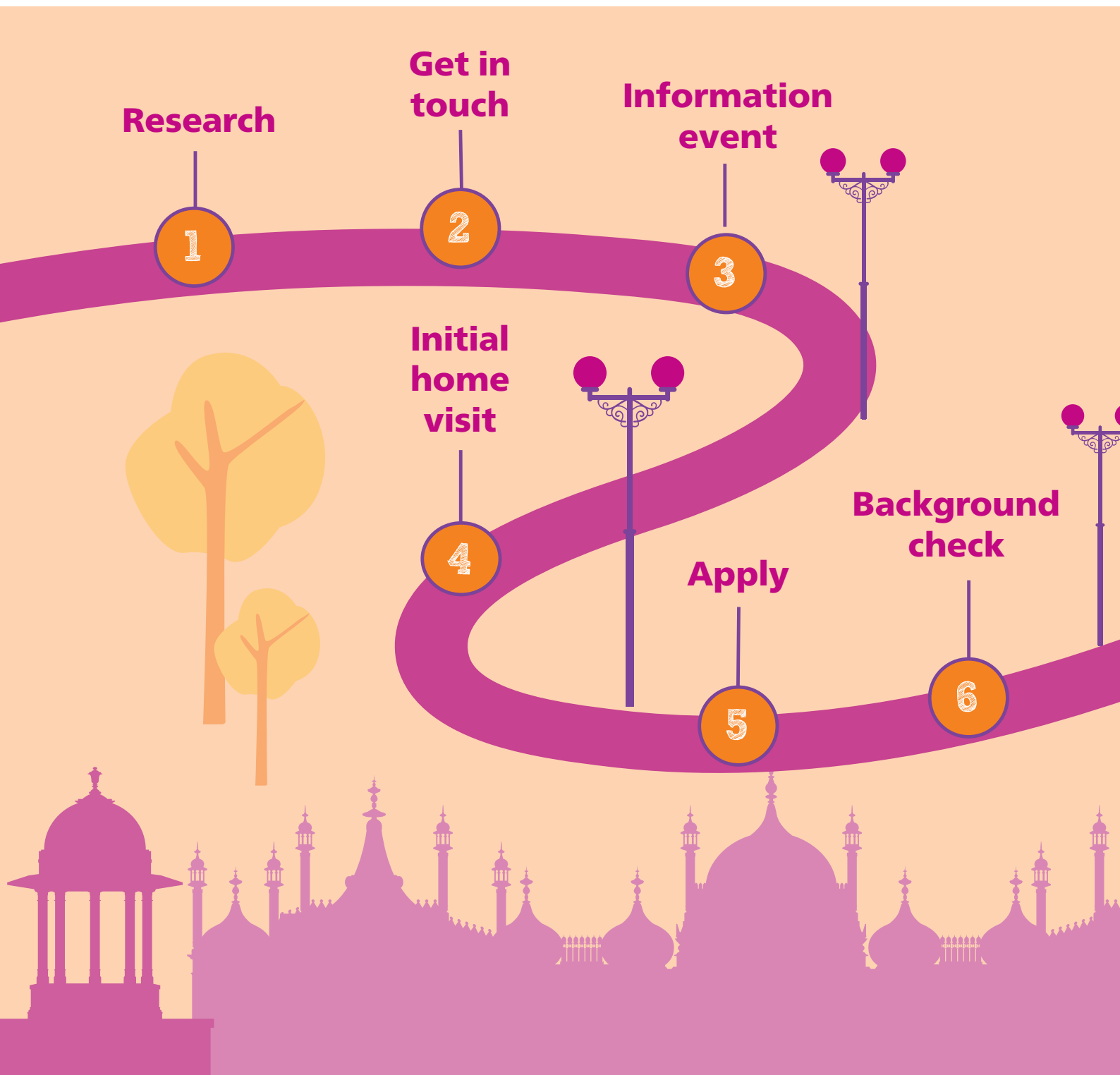
» Additional benefits

As a foster carer you are also entitled to a range of additional benefits and discounts. We will pay for you to become a member of The Fostering Network, the UK's leading fostering charity, who work continually to secure a range of discounts for foster carers. These include discounted entry to adventure parks as well as discounted short breaks, subscriptions, insurance and more.

Foster carers are also eligible for a Blue Light Card which provides thousands of discounts online and in-stores.



» Your journey to becoming an approved foster carer



Your first step into fostering can begin from anywhere within a **25 mile radius** of Brighton & Hove



Your journey

» Step by step

If you are new to fostering, your journey to becoming an approved foster carer will take approximately 6 months. For some it may be quicker, and for others it may be longer.

The time it takes will depend how ready you are to proceed at each stage. You will learn lots about fostering (and yourself) along the way; some applicants prefer to take time to digest and consider the information they learn whilst others are more confident in their decision to proceed. Each foster carer will complete the steps at their own pace and the process is designed so that you have the time to prepare and learn how to feel confident in the role.

At each stage, there is never any obligation to continue if you decide that now is not the right time. Think of it as a journey. **We will walk alongside you at every step and we will work through the different aspects together.**

» 1. Research and information gathering

You may have been at this stage for several years, or you may be at the very beginning.

» 2. Complete an online enquiry, call us, or e-mail us

When you are ready, there are several ways to get in touch. Our team will be delighted to hear from you.

» 3. Information event

We run regular information events which include a short, informal introduction to fostering. Foster carers will share their day-to-day experience of fostering for Brighton & Hove City Council and a young person will talk about the difference foster care has made to their life.

» 4. Initial home visit

An initial home visit is an opportunity for prospective foster carers to discuss their circumstances and motivations in more detail. It is an opportunity for you to ask questions, and for us to meet other members of your household such as partners, birth children and pets. You can also ask to speak with and meet an experienced foster carer to talk to them about what fostering is like. Following the visit, we will have a discussion with you about the next steps. If you feel ready to proceed and we feel you have what it takes, we will decide together to begin the assessment process.

» 5. Application and start of assessment:

We will send you an application form and you will be allocated an Assessing Social Worker.

STAGE 1

- » **6. Background checks and references**
This stage is principally about gathering basic, factual information about you and includes mandatory checks and references such as an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and a medical check. We need to make sure you are safe, honest and fit to foster.
- » **7. Attend Skills to Foster training course**
You will be invited to attend a mandatory training course designed to help you explore and understand some of the issues involved in fostering. It will begin to prepare you for life as a foster carer.

STAGE 2

- » **8. Home visits**
Your assessing social worker will visit you several times at your home. The visits will focus on getting to know you better, assessing and developing your knowledge and experience, and exploring your motivation to foster. The Assessing Social Worker will gather information about your lifestyle and look at how fostering will fit into your life. It is also an opportunity to prepare you for fostering and to ensure you feel ready and able.
- » **9. Assessment report**
Your Assessing Social Worker will compile a report called a Form F assessment. The form will be shared with you to make sure it is accurate.
- » **10. Fostering panel**
The fostering panel is made up of health and education professionals, foster carers, and independent members representing a cross-section of society. It is a welcoming space and gives you and the panel members an opportunity to talk more about your experience and strengths as well as any support you might need.

- » **11. Agency decision maker**
Following the Panel meeting, the Panel will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker, who will give the final say on your approval as a foster carer.
- » **12. Meet your Supervising Social Worker and Buddy**
You will meet your Supervising Social Worker, whose role it is to provide you with support and supervision. They will get to know you and your family well. They will visit you regularly, support you to attend support groups and training, help you to make connections with other carers and offer advice. You will also be matched with a foster carer Buddy, who will offer additional support during your first year.
- » **13. Start fostering**
During your assessment, you will have had time to consider the children and/or young people that may be a good match for you and your family. A joint decision will be made, and planned introductions will be set up. You and your family will be an important part of a team around the child that includes your Supervising Social Worker, the child's Social Worker and other professionals. Your weekly payments will start the week after the child is placed.
- » **14. Continue your fostering journey with ongoing support and training**
There will be constant opportunities to attend training courses. Some courses are mandatory, whilst others are there for you to access as and when necessary. There are a range of support groups available and lots of opportunities to meet other foster carers in your area.

» Our community

- » **We are proud of our fostering community** and the incredible work our foster carers do for Brighton & Hove's children and young people. We believe our growing and vibrant foster carer community is the best out there!
- » **Our foster carers come from all walks of life** and they care for children and young people of all ages. They are passionate about what they do and will talk to you about their experience at an information sessions, privately over the phone or in person.
- » **Foster carers in similar areas are linked together.** You will be introduced to foster carers who live nearby and invited to be part of a localised support network.

The Buddy Scheme

The Buddy Scheme is part of a multi layered approach to support new foster carers through their assessment, through panel and throughout the first six to twelve months of fostering. Our aim is to match new foster carers with experienced foster carers to ensure their first placements are a positive experience.

Matches are made according to a broad set of criteria such as geographical location, personality, family set up and the type of fostering that the new carer hopes to do. The scheme has been a huge success with close friendships often established along the way.

What our carers say

» EMMA AND ROB

FOSTER CARERS FOR SIBLINGS

"We foster siblings; they've been through the same experience, and we love that we've been able to keep them together. Our own children have been a massive part of our fostering journey and we couldn't have done it without them. They enjoy the days out that the Fostering Support Team offer, and they've always gone along and made new friends. It's nice to know that our own children are cared for just as much as the children we foster."





» **STELLA**
FOSTER CARER FOR UNDER 5S

“We foster pre-school children, ranging from a few weeks old to 4 years old. We love being foster carers and we do it as a family because whilst they are living with us, the children we care for are part of our family. We do everything we have always done as a family and more. The children benefit from being in a stable, calm, secure family set up, where they are accepted as themselves and loved for just being themselves. This is what all children deserve in life!”

» **DARREN AND FIONA**
FOSTER CARERS FOR SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

“For a long time, we believed we could not work and foster at the same time, and this stopped us from coming forward. We were amazed when we started asking our employers what support was available; there was a range of options, including being able to work flexibly.

If we had our own children, we would work, so it’s important to us to be able to work and foster because we’ve both built up good careers. For children, it’s normal for them to see parents or foster parents go out to work. We foster school-aged children so that we can work during the day and be there for them before and after school.”



» **XENAN AND VENUS**
FOSTER BROTHER AND SISTER

“We were 17 and 11 when our family became foster carers. We love having young children in our house. We love to play with them, share experiences with them and share our home with them. We have the chance to help children thrive. We give them a sense of belonging to a happy, positive, well-functioning family. We make them feel safe and loved unconditionally. We see them being happy and feeling safe, and we know we have made a huge, positive difference to their lives.”



» **CHRIS AND KIERAN**
FOSTER CARERS FOR TEENAGERS

“We’ve been fostering for 28 years; we’ve probably had 20 long term and over 100 short term. We generally foster teenagers. You see them growing up, becoming independent and moving on. You get to know them and they’re old enough to really talk to. I was a secondary school teacher so I kind of know what might be going on in their heads, so it’s easier to communicate. We enjoy being part of their lives. For instance, they’ll come on holiday with us, and we see them have experiences that very often they’ve never had before.”

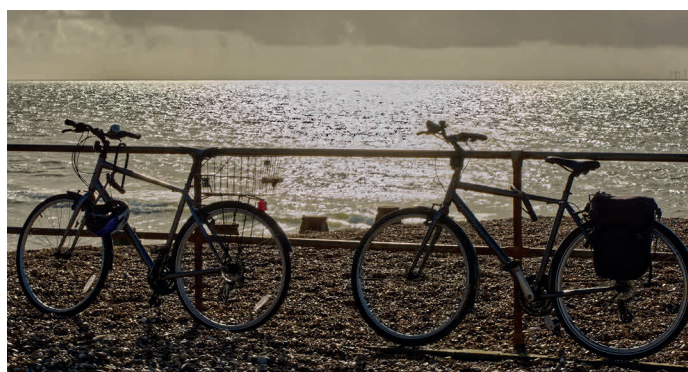
» **KIM**
FOSTER CARER FOR YOUNG REFUGEES

“When I think about why children might need refuge in this country, it really does bring it home in terms of the amount of trauma and difficulty they’ve have had to experience. Hearing about it first hand from the boys we’ve cared for makes me feel more passionate about doing this type of fostering. It’s so rewarding to see young people who have arrived in Brighton, find their feet, and find safety.”



» **ALISON**
FOSTER CARER FOR PARENT AND CHILD

“I nurture the parent to nurture their child. I’m there as a safety net and as the weeks go by, I move further and further away until the parent is demonstrating that they can sustain looking after their baby and keeping a home. I love it. I love babies. I’ve worked in a bank, and I’ve worked in an office, but with parent and child fostering I get a lot of satisfaction. I feel like I’ve made a difference.”



» **LAUREN**
FOSTER CARER FOR FOSTERING PLUS

“I was able to make a real and lasting difference to the young person I cared for by providing a stable family home, and a warm, supportive, nurturing environment. Seeing the difference this made to his self-esteem and mental health was incredibly rewarding.”

» Supported lodgings

Supported lodgings is an accommodation scheme for young people who need a secure and supportive environment in which to learn and build the skills they need for independent living. You will play an important role in helping young people to prepare for adult life by teaching them skills such as cooking, washing, housework, managing money and completing job applications.

Like fostering, the young person will live with you and your family but unlike fostering, they will need to be able to get themselves around independently so good transport links are essential. As a supported lodgings carer, you are expected to live in your property full time, but you are free to pursue your own lifestyle including going to work and on holiday.

» You can apply to be a supported lodgings carer if you are able to provide a young person with

- ✓ Their own room
- ✓ A front door key
- ✓ Access to communal spaces
- ✓ Practical support
- ✓ Emotional support
- ✓ Respect and understanding of the issues young people may face
- ✓ Life experience
- ✓ Time, flexibility, commitment and patience

You will receive a generous weekly payment, and the young person in your care will receive their own allowance. Part of your role will be to support them in understanding how to budget this allowance.

The process of becoming a supported lodgings carer follows many of the same steps illustrated on pages 13 and 14. A key difference is that supported lodgings carers have a shorter assessment and do not attend a fostering panel, while foster carers have a full assessment and need to attend a fostering panel prior to approval.

» GRAEME SUPPORTED LODGINGS CARER

"I have a full-time career, my own hobbies, my own pastimes and my own friends. Being a Supported Lodgings Carer hasn't interrupted my life. In fact, it's augmented my life. It's like being a sounding board for young people, giving them direction and teaching them about budgeting. It's helping them to make the correct life choices. Supported Lodgings is not 24/7 parenting, it's being there in the background as the safety net and being a gentle guide through life."



What happens » next?

Thank you for your interest in fostering with Brighton & Hove City Council. When you are ready to take the next step we will be here to help you with all the information and guidance you need.

- » **Complete an enquiry form on our website. We will contact you to arrange a convenient time to chat**
- » **Attend one of our regular [information events](#). Visit our Eventbrite page to view upcoming dates.**
- » **Follow our [Facebook](#) page, [Twitter](#) page and [Instagram](#) page to keep up to date with what it is like to be part of our fostering community**
- » **Call us on [01273 295444](tel:01273295444)**
- » **E-mail us at fosteringrecruitment@brighton-hove.gov.uk**

There is no obligation to proceed at any stage.

All information about fostering can be provided in other languages if required.

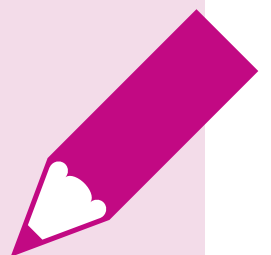


“My message to anyone thinking about fostering is to go for it! Make that enquiry. You have the potential to be an amazing foster carer and it could be the best thing you ever do.”

» notes



www.fosteringinbrightonandhove.org.uk





“The support network is amazing, it feels like being part of a bigger family. Fostering is the best thing I’ve ever done!”

“Go for it, don’t hold back. It’s like a lot of things in life... you get out of it what you put in. It’s incredibly rewarding.”



“I am so proud of the children we’ve cared for and the beautiful people they’ve blossomed into.”

“It has enhanced the caring and nurturing natures of our own children and they have positively thrived in the role.”

