

# Types of fostering

In Worcestershire there are various ways in which foster carers can give support to local children and their families. All of them are greatly valued.

## Short Term Fostering

Some children need to be cared for away from their home for a short period of time. This is often so that decisions can be made about their future. If there are brothers and sisters every effort is made to keep them together in the same foster family, sadly this is not always possible. It is important for us to find as many foster carers as possible who could consider caring for more than one child at a time.

There is no typical reason for a child needing to be looked after by a foster carer. It could be that his or her family is experiencing difficult times and has requested that their child is looked after for a short time while they sort out their difficulties. Alternatively, children may have experienced some form of abuse, trauma or neglect which has resulted in them being placed elsewhere for their own safety.

Children who are looked after by foster carers in the short term can be any age. All children will experience distress at being separated from their family and are likely to show some emotional reaction to this. Short term fostering can be for a period of days, weeks or some months. Sometimes decisions about the child's future cannot be made quickly and it can last a year or longer. Generally most children return to the care of their family when it is safe for them to do so.

## Respite Fostering

Respite foster care is time limited. A respite foster carer could care for a child for a week or two at a time, for example during school holidays, weekends, and could be with the same child on a regular basis. Foster carers who do respite fostering generally look after children who are already cared for on a full time basis by other foster carers. The foster carers with whom the child usually lives may benefit from respite.

*"I like children, especially teenagers.  
They make me laugh.  
And I remember what I was like  
as a youngster".*



helping you, help them.

## Long Term Fostering

If a child is unable to return to the care of their birth family, long term foster carers may need to be found to care for them. As the title suggests these foster carers will normally care for a child for a longer period of time than a short term carer. Children who need long term fostering are likely to be older children (not usually younger than 7 years old) for whom adoption is not appropriate. These older children will benefit from keeping in regular contact with their brothers, sisters, parents and often their wider family.

These children may stay with their foster carers until they leave home to live independently. However, it may be that changes occur and decisions can be made which result in a child returning to the care of the parents family earlier than expected.

## Parent and Child Placements

Occasionally there are parents who are unable to meet the child's most basic needs, for example parents with moderate learning difficulties. They need somewhere to live and where they can be supported in looking after their baby or young child. This type of foster placement can help a family to stay together. The foster carer would be asked to give practical and emotional support to help the parent to develop the skills needed to meet their own and their child's needs. This is a part of an assessment for a period usually limited to a few months.

## Support Care

There are families in the community who benefit from receiving support in the form of short breaks, Support Care is a scheme, which can provide this. Support Care is one part of a support package provided by Worcestershire County Council Family Support Service to families in the community who are facing difficulties and are at the point of breakdown. Support Care aims to prevent children being looked after by foster carers full time, and therefore plays an essential role in helping families to stay together. It involves working with the families of children and builds on the work the Family Support workers are doing with them. Support Care is for children between the ages 5 - 15yrs. It involves short-term breaks, one weekend a

month or a midweek overnight stay, with the same child for a time-limited period, up to a maximum of 9 months. Carers can offer care to children from different families at different times over the same period.

## Contract Care

Some children's experiences have been so difficult or traumatic that they are unable to be cared for in a mainstream foster family. For example, the children may need to be supervised closely and display very challenging behaviour which could be a risk to other children.

For these children Worcestershire has developed the Contract Care Scheme. Foster carers who provide this care will have considerable fostering experience or have worked in a childcare setting where they have developed the skills needed to care for children with complex needs.

Children living with contract carers would have one carer at home full time and no other vulnerable children living with them. The child or young person would stay with the contract foster carer for a time-limited period of assessment.

## Respite for children with disabilities

Barnardos Short Breaks scheme manages Worcestershire County Council's respite service for children with disabilities and their families. If respite care for children with disabilities is the area of fostering which interests you please contact the scheme at:

**Barnardo's Short Breaks  
Prestige House  
Wassage Way  
Hampton Lovett  
Worcestershire  
WR9 0LX  
Telephone: 01905 778275**

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