

Fostering is where a child or young person between the ages of 0 and 18, who has become looked after, lives with a foster carer in a family home. This is often temporary or short term but is sometimes a long term arrangement.

Portsmouth City Council recognises that a child's needs are best met by a nurturing family and is committed to placing children who are not able to remain in their own family in appropriate alternative family based placements wherever possible.

The council's Fostering Service is tasked with this work and also aims to place children and young people within the city or surrounding area in order for them to maintain contact with their family and friends, to continue at the same school or college and thrive within their community, where it is safe to do so.

Portsmouth Fostering Service's main areas of work are:

- Recruiting and assessing foster carers - there is a dedicated recruitment and assessment team with a mainstream recruitment and assessment pod and a connected person (family and friends) assessment pod
- Supporting and supervising approved mainstream and connected persons foster carers - there is a dedicated team of supervising social workers
- Recruiting and assessing supportive lodgings carers for looked after young people and care leavers aged 16 to 24 - there is a dedicated supported lodgings assessment worker
- Supporting and supervising approved supported lodgings carers - there is a dedicated supported lodgings support worker
- Matching children and young people requiring placements to available foster carers and supportive lodgings carers - there is a dedicated Access to Resources team which includes a Commissioning Contracts Officer who identifies, sets up and manages external placements where required

How do people become foster carers?

The council has its own fostering website and Facebook page and through these channels people are encouraged to register an interest in becoming a foster carer. The Recruitment and Assessment Team also hold a number of recruitment events throughout the year and advertise the need for foster carers using different mediums.

People over the age of 18 may apply to become a foster carer, there is no maximum age limit however physical 'fitness to foster' is assessed via a GP medical. Interest is welcomed from all members of the community regardless of relationship status, employment situation, class, gender, sexuality, culture, ethnicity or religion. Portsmouth is usually seeking to recruit more foster carers for teenagers and for those with the transferable skills and/or related experience to work with children and young people with complex needs.

There is an immediate exclusion of any applicant who has been convicted of any serious offence against a child or adult.

Foster carers must have a spare room available to foster and their home must meet the standards required via a health and safety check.

There is an assessment and approval process which starts with a conversation about fostering and is followed by home visits, training, preparation, the formal application, statutory/good practice checks and presentation at Portsmouth Fostering Panel. The decision regarding suitability to foster and terms of approval (number, age, gender of child and type of fostering) is made by The Agency Decision Maker taking into account the fostering panel recommendation.



One Minute Guide Fostering



What foster carers can expect from Portsmouth Fostering Service?

Foster carers are provided with various types of support to help them with their role - see Portsmouth City Council Foster Carers' Charter. This includes:

- To be respected and treated as a member of the team around the child
- Monthly supervision from a supervising social worker and an annual review of their fostering approval
- Specialist support from partner agencies and the team around the child including the Virtual School, looked after children's nurses, CAMHS
- Independent support if subject to an allegation
- Comprehensive Training Pathway
- Foster carer support groups and social activities
- Support group and social activities for carers' own children
- Out of hours support
- Respite and foster carers' leave
- Loan of equipment to foster
- Financial support - allowances, expenses, fees and if meeting the necessary criteria support with the cost of home extensions and adaptations
- Formal consultation with Senior Managers via Foster Carers Liaison Group

What kind of fostering placements are there in Portsmouth?

Foster carer placements may be for babies, parent and child placements, unaccompanied minors (UAMs), young children, older children and young people including teenagers, disabled children, and sibling groups.

There are a number of different types of placements provided by Portsmouth Fostering Service including:

- Mockingbird Model of Care- this is a model of care based on an extended family model. A network of 6-8 foster carers are supported by a home hub carer who leads in facilitating support, including ongoing training for carers, virtual and face to face support within the network, sleepovers for the looked after children (respite)
- Short term fostering - this is a time limited arrangement
- Long term fostering - this is for planned permanent placements where a decision has been made via the fostering panel process that this is the best arrangement for the child or young person
- Respite - this is planned, where children and young people stay with another foster carer as part of the child's care plan
- Short breaks for children living at home - this is part of a package of support where carers provide planned time limited support to maintain children with their families and prevent children coming into care on a longer basis
- Family Link - Short breaks for disabled children where carers provide planned time limited support to maintain children with their families
- Connected persons' foster placements - provided by people who already know the child or young person and who are usually a family member or a friend
- Staying Put arrangements - foster carers who continue to provide accommodation for their ex-foster child once they have turned 18 (this is not a foster placement)
- Supportive Lodgings Placements - for looked after young people aged 16 - 18 and Care Leavers. Lodgings carers provide board and lodge and a minimum of 10 hours of support a week to the young person (this is not a foster placement)

How are children referred to the fostering service and matched to a placement?

Children's social workers identify the child's need for a placement outside of their family, or current living situation, and complete a Referral Form identifying the child's needs (including risk assessment), the type of placement they are seeking and the outcomes to be achieved.



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The referral may request an in-house foster placement, in house residential placement or an external provision. For an external provision Senior Management agreement must be in place.

The Referral is sent to the Access to Resources Team who will search for a placement matching the identified child's needs with placement availability.

Once a placement is matched information is sent to the child's social worker to progress the placement.

The child's social worker is responsible for placing the child and participating in a Placement Planning Meeting which sets out the expectations of the placement and provides the carer with full information required to care for the child.

For more information:

If you want to know more about fostering in Portsmouth you can access the website at www.foster.portsmouth.gov.uk

Following links from the website to Portsmouth City Council Fostering Statement of Purpose and Foster Carers' Charter

Contact the Fostering Services on 023 9283 4071 or email fostering@portsmouth.gov.uk