

# What is fostering and why foster with the Isle of Wight Council?



**IW Fostering** 

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## What is fostering?

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Fostering is looking after someone else's child or teenager in your own home. Foster care is about providing a child with a safe, stable, home environment for as long as they need it.

Foster carers are ordinary people who are doing something extraordinary.

## Why do we need foster carers on the Isle of Wight?

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Foster carers offer stability, support, care and encouragement at a crucial time in a child's life.

By doing ordinary everyday things for them, foster carers make an extraordinary difference and help to create positive futures.

We believe that, where possible, children and young people in care should be placed locally, with Island families, to help give them stability and to maintain important links with family and friends at what is already an unsettling time.



**“There is no greater thing in life than to give a child a place of safety and security; where they can reach their potential.”**

**IW Foster carer**

## What types of fostering are there?

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Some children need a temporary home for a short period. Other children will need a home for longer periods; some will need a permanent foster home. Whatever your skills or experience, there's a type of fostering that could suit you:

### **Emergency placements**

This is where children need somewhere safe to stay for a few nights.

### **Short term placements**

This is where carers look after children for a few weeks or months (although this can sometimes be for up to two years) while plans are made for the child's future.

### **Long term placements**

Some children who cannot return to their own families need long term foster carers they may be older children or those who continue to have regular contact with relatives. These children live with long-term foster carers until they reach adulthood and are ready to live independently.

### **'Connected persons' fostering**

This is where children who are looked after by a local authority are cared for by people they already know, such

as their extended family members or close family friends. Connected persons fostering can also be emergency and short term or long term.

### **Family link**

Some of the children in our care have physical, medical, learning disabilities or a combination of these additional needs.

Family link offers short breaks for children and their parents. With registered foster families who offer either daytime or overnight care.

### **Supported lodgings**

This provides semi-independent lodgings for young people (aged 16 to 20) who are preparing to leave care.

This is designed to help children make a successful transition from care to independent living.

## Why do children need fostering?

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There are a variety of reasons why children may need to be fostered. It could be that a parent is temporarily unable to care for them due to illness, bereavement or another crisis. There may be abuse or neglect in the family which makes it unsafe for the child to remain at home. The aim is for the child

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to return home safely but if this isn't possible, we would provide a child with a foster family.

Children and young people in foster care may have experienced traumatic and neglectful pasts. They may have been responsible for caring for younger brothers and sisters or have lived with parents who showed violent behaviour or who had addictions.

Children need foster families who can show patience and understanding

to help them make sense of their experience and new surroundings. They need families who can protect them from harm, nurture and provide emotional support; offering kindness and stability at this difficult time.

Through ongoing support and a flexible approach, our foster families help children and young people reach their potential. We know that our foster carers are making a significant difference and that they, in turn, feel valued and supported.





**“Being a foster parent is a rewarding role. Your patience, support and guidance can change a child’s life.”**  
**IW Foster carer**

## **Do children have contact with their birth families?**

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Contact with birth families is important. The amount of contact that children in care have with their family varies. Contact can include home visits, telephone contact or written letters either supervised or unsupervised.

## **Who can foster?**

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If you want to make a difference for children and have the energy, time and space, you can apply to be a foster carer.

Can you:

- give children the time and attention they need and stick with them?
- work as part of a team with other professionals involved in the child’s life?

## What is fostering and why foster with the Isle of Wight Council?

- be flexible in handling a range of sometimes challenging behaviour and be non-judgemental?
- keep written records of your foster child's day-to-day life and keep information confidential?
- respect and accept a young person's identity, sexuality, disability, religion, culture, race, language and any individual needs?

Fostering is about the support that you can offer a child. Foster carers come from a variety of backgrounds and have a wide range of life and work experiences. We welcome diversity and recognise that no two situations are the same and will assess suitability on an individual basis.

If you are thinking about fostering and are aged over 21, have a spare room please contact us for further discussions. If you don't think you are eligible to foster because of your age, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability, culture or ethnicity – please re-think and get in touch.

### Why should I foster for the Isle of Wight Council?

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Whether you are new to fostering or already work with an independent agency, your application to the IW

Council fostering service would be welcomed! We will work with your agency to facilitate a smooth transfer.

Isle of Wight foster carers are a strong community and always look forward to welcoming new recruits. We are proud of our committed and skilled local authority fostering families and hope that you will consider joining them.

When children cannot live with their birth families, the local authority has a duty to look after them. Our aim is to try to place them with Isle of Wight foster carers. If we are unable to provide a suitable in-house match, only then will we consider outside agencies.

Our Fostering allowances are competitive, and we provide extensive local training and support groups which are all on the Isle of Wight.

Our service has had positive OFSTED and peer inspections and we work hard to make sure that our foster carers are well supported in their role.

Being part of the local authority means that your supervising social worker is based on the Island, generally in the same building as the child's social worker. This enables better collaboration to achieve the best outcomes for foster carers and children placed with you.

We encourage our foster carers to fully engage with all aspects of the service; this includes being involved with the delivery of training, buddying new foster carers and developing networks with each other as well as attending support groups.

We need foster carers in all areas of the Isle of Wight, for all ages of children with varied needs and sometimes for groups of siblings.

## How does fostering fit in with children's services?

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The fostering service is part of children's services at the Isle of Wight Council. We place the needs of the Island's children and young people at the centre of our work. Professionals from a range of disciplines work together; providing the support needed for children to reach their full potential.

Children's services provide an extensive range of services to support every stage of children's development – from the birth of a child to lifelong learning for adults.

The children's service, which includes fostering, is inspected regularly by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) the full inspection reports can be viewed at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## How do I apply?

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There are three ways in which you can apply:

- Complete our online enquiry form at [iwight.com/Fostering](http://iwight.com/Fostering)
- Call our team on 01983 823160 and we will be happy to take you through the form and complete it on your behalf.
- Visit us at a drop-in event where a team member can go through the form with you. Drop-in event details can be found on Facebook: [@Isleofwightfosteringandadoption](https://www.facebook.com/Isleofwightfosteringandadoption)

## Initial visit

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Once you have contacted us, we will send you our information pack and a fostering team member will arrange an initial visit. We can then discuss in more detail the skills you need to become a foster care and we can answer your questions.



# What is fostering and why foster with the Isle of Wight Council?



## 'Skills to Foster' training

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You will be invited to attend a preparation course called 'Skills to Foster'. This provides an opportunity to learn more about fostering. The courses are run locally in the evenings and at weekends.

## Your application

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If you decide to proceed, you will need to complete an application form. Fostering involves the whole family, so if you have a partner and children, they will need to be part of the application process too.

## The assessment

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You will be allocated a social worker who will begin the assessment with you and your family.

The assessment consists of two stages:  
**Stage one:** checks and gathering factual information about you and your household.

**Stage two:** involves a number of home visits and considers your strengths and any areas for development.

This part of the process can feel intrusive; but we need to ensure we get it right for children in our care. Just as importantly, we need to get it right for you and your family.

A thorough assessment not only helps us to assess your suitability, but also guides us later when matching children with you. Working in partnership with your assessing social worker, you will be guided through this process.

medical and local authority checks. Child health and education checks will be carried out on any school-age children in the household and we will also ask you to provide employment, and personal references.

## Checks

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The safety of our children is paramount and legally we are required to undertake rigorous checks on all people in the household.

In the first stage of the process we will carry out Criminal Records Bureau,

## Preparing your children

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Your children would become a part of a fostering family and so it is also important that they are prepared and have some understanding of what to expect. Your assessing social worker will also talk to your children as a part of the assessment.



### How long will it take to become a foster carer?

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We aim to complete assessments within five months from the time we receive your application form.

Sometimes personal circumstances like holidays or other significant events can delay the process. Delays can also be caused by the checks taking longer than expected.

### Fostering panel

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Your fostering assessment will be shared with you before going to panel. This enables you to check the accuracy of factual information.

This assessment is then presented to the fostering panel. The panel consisting of a combination of professionals from different backgrounds will make a recommendation regarding your suitability to foster. You will be invited to attend the panel meeting.

The agency decision-maker, who is a senior manager, will make a decision to challenge or ratify the panel recommendation. If the decision is to approve you, you will become a

registered foster carer for the Isle of Wight Council.

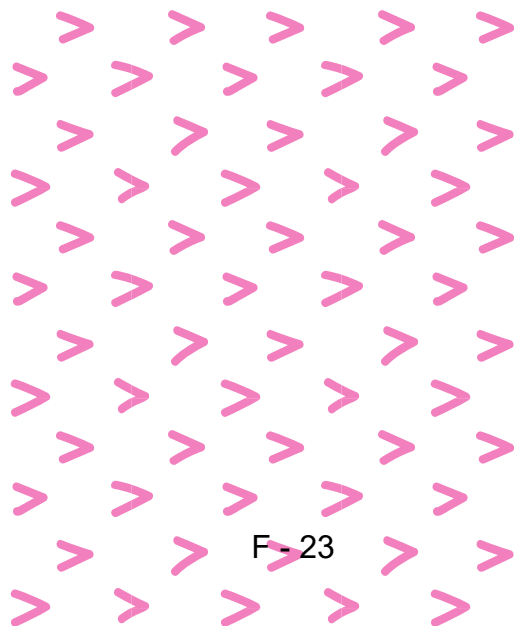
The next step is the most exciting one – the placement of your first child.

### Training and support

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We provide support groups for carers because we know that often the best source of support is from others in a similar situation.

We believe, and our carers agree, that our package of training and support is a positive part of the support we offer. We are continually working to develop our programme and work in collaboration with our foster carers.



# IW Fostering



Consider fostering or adoption today. Visit [iwight.com/Fostering](http://iwight.com/Fostering) or call **01983 823160**



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