

Becoming a Great Foster Carer

Supporting Gloucestershire County Council Foster Carers

Why foster with Gloucestershire County Council?

Fostering is an amazing journey that can help change a child's life. Across our county, there are many children who need a happy home to grow up in. It's our priority to find local foster carers for local children – reducing disruption to their lives and enabling them to stay in familiar surroundings.

Choosing to foster with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) means becoming a valued partner with a fostering service that is focused on helping foster carers provide a caring, secure and stable home environment for children and young people in Gloucestershire.

Inspiring and supportive services for foster carers to meet the needs of children in care

Whether you are taking your first steps into fostering, transferring from another fostering service or agency, or if you have many years of experience, we offer a wide range of advice, resources, training and support to help you remain fulfilled in your role and effectively meet the need of the children you care for. Collaboration, communication and a community focus underpin our core offer to foster carers and we invite you to read this document to find out more.

Fostering
Gloucestershire
County Council



www.gloucetershire.gov.uk/fostering

Becoming a Foster Carer with Gloucestershire County Council

Let's talk!

We offer group sessions for you and others interested in fostering to find out more and for us to answer your questions. We also have experienced members of staff available for one-to-one conversations, to help you decide if fostering is right for you.

Fostering Buddy/Champion

We have many foster carers who are happy to be there for you, answer your questions, share their experience, offer tips and tricks, or just be available for a coffee and a chat. Our Fostering Champions have been carers for at least two years and can provide insight into fostering for you and your family throughout the assessment process.

Online news and information

Our website is updated regularly with everything you could want to know about fostering and becoming a foster carer. There are real stories about our foster carers, insight into the different kinds of fostering, details about payments and allowances, our fostering blog, and much more. We also have a secure site which houses pertinent information for approved foster carers.

'Skills to Foster' training

Led by an experienced foster carer and social worker, Skills to Foster will give you and your family a comprehensive understanding that will prepare you for fostering.

Home visits and assessment process

Our team are here for you. You will be supported throughout the assessment process, including home visits, by an experienced social worker, and one of our friendly family support workers. They are available to help and give advice when you need it.

Already an experienced Foster Carer?

If you've already fostered with an independent agency, or you've moved to the county having fostered elsewhere, we can offer fast-track assessments to get you fostering for us as soon as possible.



Congratulations, you're a foster carer!

Once you are approved as a foster carer, we continue to support you with every aspect of fostering.

Fostering supervising social worker

The social worker who helped with your assessment will support you for the first three months. Then you will be assigned a dedicated supervising social worker who will support you via monthly visits, and any additional time and advice needed to enhance the outcomes for children in your care. They will get to know you and your family and are a trustworthy link to other roles such as your foster child's social worker.

Guides to help you

You will receive our *Guide for New Foster Carers* and our regularly updated *Fostering Handbook*.

Payments, allowances and discounts

You will receive payments to cover the cost of looking after a child, and a competitive allowance which recognises your time and skills. In addition, amounts are paid for children's birthdays, savings, special celebrations, and holidays. As an extra bonus, your foster carer I.D. card will give you access to discounts at various shops, activities and entertainment, and you also qualify for a Blue Light Card, offering many more savings online and on the high street.

Family support workers

As well as helping during the assessment process, our family support workers provide ongoing support with understanding your role, therapeutic parenting, and bespoke support for the children you are caring for.

Foster carer groups

We have various support groups in your local area, as well as online, where you can meet other foster carers. We also have special support groups covering carers who are single, male, or related to the child, as well as those who are caring for specific young people including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and emergency foster carers.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Our partnership with CAMHS entitles you to four bespoke sessions during the first year of being a foster carer which you attend with your supervising social worker, and one-to-one sessions after your first year.

Fostering network memberships

Free membership of several fostering national networks and organisations that offer independent support to foster carers, for example, The Fostering Network and New Family Social.

Kids for Kids (K4K)

K4K offers a programme of fun activities, events, learning opportunities, and support specifically for birth children of foster carers.

Training and development

Your personal development plan will include details about compulsory training as well as optional learning, such as our Diploma-level courses.

Ongoing advice

Independent legal advice is offered to all foster carers, and out of hours support is available 24:7.

Our promise to you

We will keep you informed.

Through our newsletters and email updates, blog and social media, we will make sure you know what's going on with GCC fostering and events, opportunities and news.

We will appreciate and celebrate you.

From the welcome box you receive after becoming a foster carer, to gifts and certificates celebrating the milestones you reach with us, and events such as our annual appreciation evening and family fun days – we will strive to show you we value you.

We will listen to you.

We are here to support you, and that means listening to and acting on your thoughts, experiences and recommendations. You will have chances to influence how we develop and deliver our services, either through your annual review process, or taking part in our service audit process, participating in service development working groups, or offering feedback through the local and specialist fostering groups.

We will offer opportunities for growth.

You might want to apply to be a Fostering Champion to support other foster carers, filming your fostering story to help recruit future foster carers, speak on behalf of GCC Fostering on the radio, develop your therapeutic parenting skills for specialised aspects of fostering such as Parent and Child arrangements, write a blog post, or take part in steering groups for fostering development initiatives. There will always be opportunities to learn and grow and we are keen to hear suggestions from our foster carers.

If you want to know more about any of the support or services mentioned, please contact us on **01242 532654** or **fostering@gloucestershire.gov.uk**

You can also search our website for foster carer stories, payment information, FAQs and much more **www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fostering**

