



## SC000026201: Start your fostering journey



Pearce, Josh  
Marketing Manager (FRAT)

There are many misconceptions when it comes to starting your fostering journey, and Hampshire County Council Fostering Service is on a mission to dispel some of the most common. From working full time and not owning your own home, to being 'too old', single or divorced – these are just some of the myths that lead people to discount themselves from being able to foster. And none of them are true. Perhaps the biggest myth of all is that you can't foster without significant care experience. While it's true that you do need some care experience, many Hampshire residents might be surprised to find they already have some experience on which to build the foundations of their fostering journey. Whether that is as a teacher, childminder, school governor or even their own parenting experience.

As a foster carer, you will support some of Hampshire's most vulnerable children and Hampshire County Council Fostering Service wants to ensure that you are as prepared as possible to start this journey. Gaining and expanding your experience with children will help you to demonstrate with confidence that you have the right skills to meet children's needs, and to flourish when the time comes for you to care for your own foster child.

Hampshire's foster carers come from a variety of backgrounds and have a wealth of different experience. Shelley, a foster carer with Hampshire County Council Fostering Service, discovered fostering while working as a teacher.

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*"I taught for nearly 10 years in both a mainstream and a mental health primary school before I became a foster carer. I have always loved working with children and seeing how they change, grow and flourish. However, I didn't feel like I was maximising myself to give them the best chance to do so. I wanted to do more for children.*

*"It didn't take me long to work out that fostering is what I wanted to do. I looked into a range of different foster care options but Hampshire jumped out at me. With a quick telephone call or email I was able to speak and meet foster carers who spoke honestly about their experiences and the support they had received. I was eager to join them.*

*"Starting the process was easy, it worked around my teaching, and I was able to arrange meetings and appointments to fit in with my life. It took around six months to become an approved carer, all the while being supported by social workers and a buddy carer to help me every step of the way. Within the first year of fostering, I taught at the same time, but I know so many carers who continue to balance fostering and teaching too.*

*"I have now been fostering for nearly five years and I have supported so many children. I have seen them grow in confidence, learn to trust, play, laugh, and smile, find stability in their birth homes or be adopted and find their forever homes too."*

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Shelley is just one of many carers in Hampshire who continue to discover fostering, applying their everyday care experience and transforming both their own lives and the lives of the children in their care.

Rated outstanding by Ofsted, Hampshire County Council's Fostering Service provides extensive training, support and generous allowances to its registered foster carers. It is looking for more carers to bring their compassion to help vulnerable young people in their communities.

Find out if that could be you.

Call 0300 131 2797 today to find out more or join our virtual Q&A event on 21 September (10:00-11:00) via [hants.gov.uk/youcan](https://hants.gov.uk/youcan)