

Become a Fostering Friendly Employer

**Learn how you can make a difference
to the lives of young people in care.**



 **Leicestershire
County Council**

**FOSTERING FRIENDLY
EMPLOYER** ✓



Thank you for choosing to learn more about becoming a Fostering Friendly employer!

In 2023, we were the first local authority in Leicestershire to gain the Fostering Friendly status, and we are now on a mission.

Around 1 in 890 employees in the UK are also foster carers (The Fostering Network), and we believe that there is a fundamental need for them to be fully supported by their employer throughout their fostering journey.

We believe that all Leicestershire organisations, no matter their industry or size, should want to learn more about becoming a Fostering Friendly employer. The scheme can benefit everybody involved but, most importantly, the children and young people currently living in care.

“

Families are the backbone of our communities, and we want families who foster to be supported in work.

It is hugely rewarding to be a foster carer and the skills learned can easily be transferred into the workplace, making your workplace a more attractive place to be.

Investing in your staff's wellbeing will help your business to be more productive. It will demonstrate your commitment to supporting staff, help build morale, and can also help with staff retention and recruitment.

Becoming a Fostering Friendly employer is straightforward, there are no direct costs involved and it can have a big impact - for your company and our Leicestershire children.

So, what are you waiting for?

”

CLlr Deborah Taylor
Cabinet Member for Children and Families,
Leicestershire County Council



“

Fostering friendly employers make a real difference for foster carers and for the children they care for. It makes it easier for people to consider fostering and in turn supports them to transform children's lives. We would be delighted if you join us in becoming a fostering friendly employer to support carers and to improve the life chances and opportunities for Leicestershire's children in care.

”

Jane Moore
Director of Children and Family Services,
Leicestershire County Council



What is a Fostering Friendly Employer?

The state of our foster care system

Children and young people enter care for numerous reasons, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis. Reasons could range from short-term family illness, all the way up to long-term abuse or neglect.

No matter the reason, and no matter their individual needs, the UK care system supports all children and young people who enter. In 2023, there was over 100,000 children in the care system in the UK (The Fostering Network), and this number is on the rise. Thousands of new foster carers are needed every year to keep up with demand; it is also imperative that existing foster carers are retained to maintain a base level.

At any given time of the year, there are approximately 700 children and young people in care across Leicestershire.

Leicestershire County Council is responsible for accommodating and taking care of all looked-after children and young people in our county, and for recruiting new foster carers.

What is The Fostering Network?

The Fostering Network is a multi-faceted organisation that aims to make the UK foster care provision the very best it can be.

The Fostering Network works with, and supports, everyone involved in the lives of fostered children and young people - including fostering services, foster carers and the fostered children and young people themselves. They also support UK organisations with schemes such as Fostering Friendly.

Did you know?

The Fostering Network estimate that
a child enters foster care every 15 minutes

(The Fostering Network)





What is a Fostering Friendly Employer?

Fostering Friendly is a programme that was established by The Fostering Network.

Above all, the scheme aims to encourage employers to support fostering through supporting their employees. The scheme allows employers to formally recognise and support the roles of their employees who foster, or support employees who are interested in becoming foster carers. The scheme involves no direct cost.

What does a Fostering Friendly employer do?

Organisations who hold the Fostering Friendly status pledge to implement HR policies that recognise and benefit all foster carers within their employment, regardless of the fostering service they use.

Policies could include additional paid time off, flexible working arrangements or access to emergency leave. Policies like these can assist in allowing time off for assessment visits, completing mandatory foster carer training, attending meetings, welcoming a child at short notice, or responding to an emergency.

Fostering Friendly employers are also encouraged to raise the profile of fostering in their organisation and encourage their employees to consider becoming foster carers. They could do this through:

- supporting the annual 'Foster Care Fortnight' campaign
- sharing fostering information in employee newsletters or bulletins
- displaying information posters
- welcoming the Leicestershire County Council Fostering Recruitment Team to team meetings, or allowing us to directly reach a new audience (eg. employees or customers).

What are the benefits to the employee?

Whether you have 20 or 20,000 employees and above, this policy can work for you!

Employee benefits

Your employees will see and value your investment in their local area.

- A supportive employer can make all the difference, leading to increased engagement and input at work.
- Dynamic and inclusive employment benefits, such as additional paid leave or flexible working policies.
- A supportive employer that proves their difference from others, and their value of employees' life choices and needs.
- Increased access to the advice and support from our team to better understand the benefits of fostering with Leicestershire County Council.

Some of the benefits you could offer include:

- Additional paid leave.
- Flexible working patterns and leave arrangements.
- Flexible working locations.

Specific benefits offered to eligible employees can be entirely customised to suit your business and employee needs. The Fostering Network can help assess what HR policies might work for you.

Did you know?

Around 1 in 890 employees in the UK are also foster carers (The Fostering Network). This may help you to estimate what the take up may be for your business.

Case study

Michelle and her husband, Martin, have been foster carers for Leicestershire County Council for over 13 years.

Since their approval, Michelle and Martin have successfully cared for several children and young people. They also offer short term and respite foster care to other fostering families.

Michelle works full time at Leicestershire County Council and has been benefitting from the new Fostering Friendly policy that has been put in place.



“ When our supervising social worker told us that Leicestershire County Council is now a Fostering Friendly Employer, I felt so valued as a foster carer, and proud to be an employee of an organisation that cares and supports our fostering family. I'm so proud to be part of something bigger that greatly benefits our fostering family and community.

I also felt relieved. In the past I have felt guilty that I both work and foster, and tried hard to keep them separate.

Fostering is a journey we do with pride, and I feel proud to be part of an organisation that is committed to being a foster friendly employer and joining us on that journey. I hope that this will encourage other employees and employers to foster!

Now that my employer is Fostering Friendly, I feel more committed to my work. It's like they believe in me and truly value what I do for local children. It has been far easier to balance my role as a foster carer as well as my busy job and it feels like we're in it together. ”

Michelle has more time for us to go to the park together and she makes my favourite Shepherds pie more often now!

Joel, aged 8 (Foster child).

What are the benefits to the employer?

Recruitment and retention

- Cultivate a supportive and inclusive work culture, allowing employees to feel supported in their life and family choices.
- Showcase your support of staff wellbeing, including demonstrating your support of diverse family life.
- Promote your commitment to work-life balance within your organisation.
- Increase your status as an attractive employer and distinguish your job benefits from competitors.

Corporate social responsibility

- Demonstrate a sense of strong corporate social responsibility through pledging your support and commitment to your local area.
- Allow your organisation and your employees to directly improve the lives of looked-after children and young people across Leicestershire.
- Create a diverse and inclusive workplace where opportunities to do good are encouraged and the wellbeing of staff is highly valued.
- Proudly display the Fostering Friendly logo across your owned digital channels, organisation stationery and recruitment materials.
- Be in with the chance to win a Fostering Excellence Award (Fostering Friendly Employer of the Year) from The Fostering Network.

Did you know?

Investing in employee wellbeing promotes increased resilience, better employee engagement, reduced sickness absence and higher performance and productivity.

CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development).

Interested in gaining Fostering Friendly status?



1

Get in touch with the team via **fosteringfriendlyemployer@leics.gov.uk** or give us a call **0116 305 0505**.

2

We can help answer any questions you may have about becoming a Fostering Friendly Employer, and point you in the right direction of where to start.

3

We will support you with accreditation of your status with The Fostering Network. Their team is also on hand to provide any practical advice to help you join the scheme.

4

You can celebrate your new status as a Fostering Friendly Employer!

5

Our team will promote your status via our social media platforms and ensure that your staff have access to any information, including personalised events for your organisation if required.



Ongoing Support

The Fostering Network

- Offer advice and support about joining the Fostering Friendly scheme, including sharing an example HR policy template.
- Ensure that your business is published on The Fostering Network website, as well as promote and celebrate your new status.
- Be available to offer advice and expertise from the UK's leading fostering charity.



Leicestershire County Council

- Promote your new status on our social media channels and website.
- Provide artwork for internal and external purposes.
- Provide marketing materials to promote your status internally and externally.
- Arrange virtual or in-person events, tailored to your business, for your employees.



Organisations that have already adopted Fostering Friendly policies span many industries, including retail, local government and public services, educational institutions, national banks, and professional sporting institutions.

A full list can be viewed here:

www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/championing-fostering/fostering-friendly

Case studies

“We recognised that the impact for us as a company is relatively small, but the impact for any potential child being fostered could be significant.”

Karin O’Connell, Deputy Head of People Success, Synetics and Port Vale.

“We recognise and value the enormous contribution that foster carers make to the lives of children in care. We also understand the need for flexibility at work to meet the needs of foster children, which is why we are committed to supporting colleagues who are foster carers.”

Professor Martin Jones, Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive, Staffordshire University.

“ ‘We take great pride in being a community-focussed club and being Fostering Friendly is one of the ways we demonstrate that.

‘Beyond our HR policy, we work closely with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to ensure that we support the children and young people’s agenda across the city.

‘We have supported our local foster carers by hosting various celebration events at the stadium, including the Foster Care Fortnight and their Christmas parties, which were a resounding success.”

Adrian Hurst, Head of Community, Stoke City Football Club



Take the next step!

Get in touch directly with the Leicestershire County Council
Fostering Recruitment Team for a chat.

Call: **0116 305 0505**

Email: **fosteringfriendlyemployer@leics.gov.uk**

Website: **leicestershire.gov.uk/become-a-fostering-friendly-employer**



www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/championing-fostering/fostering-friendly

