

South East local authorities join forces to recruit more foster carers

Councils from across the South East have come together to create the country's largest local authority fostering partnership, in a bid to increase the number of foster carers across the region.

With over 11,000 children in care across the South East, and fewer than 3,000 local authority approved foster carers, there is an urgent need to recruit more people to provide safe, loving, and local homes for vulnerable children.

Launching today (8 July), Local Authority Fostering South East is a new virtual fostering hub bringing together the expertise of 20 councils from across the region. The new hub will ensure prospective foster carers have access to a centralised platform for their initial enquiries about fostering and will see local authorities work collaboratively to provide the best support, right from the start of a carer's fostering journey.

The new regional hub will be running marketing campaigns to raise awareness of this unique role and encourage more people to take the next step and become a foster carer with their local council. In doing so they will benefit from comprehensive local training, generous financial assistance, and ongoing support from a non-profit organisation.

Natasha Sampson, South East regional strategic lead, said: "This is a really exciting time for fostering. For the first time in the South East, we are leveraging the collective skills, knowledge, resources and support of 20 local authorities to ensure children and young people have a stable home, in a loving family, which they all deserve.

"The new hub will make this possible by increasing the number of local foster carers and making sure they are well supported through their recruitment journey and beyond.

"I would urge anyone interested in fostering to get in touch with us to find out more about becoming a foster carer with your local authority."

Achieving for Children is a proud partner of this national Department for Education (DfE) funded project, with Local Authority Fostering South East being the largest of nine regions taking part in this pilot programme.

Prospective foster carers will also benefit from a new fostering ambassador scheme, enabling them to speak to an existing carer to find out what this life-changing role is really like.

More information on becoming a foster carer can be found on the new regional website (LafosteringSE.org.uk) and by following Local Authority Fostering South East on Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter).

Those interested in fostering can also contact the regional hub directly to speak to a member of the recruitment team by calling 0300 131 2797.

The local authorities involved in this project are:

- Achieving for Children (London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames, The Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames and The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead)
- Bracknell Forest Council
- Brighton and Hove City Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- Kent County Council
- Medway Council
- Milton Keynes City Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Portsmouth City Council
- Brighter Futures for Children (Reading)
- Slough Borough Council
- Southampton City Council
- Surrey County Council
- West Berkshire Council
- West Sussex County Council
- Wokingham Borough Council