



Winchester Round Table Charity Spotlight

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Can you tell us about your role?

I work for Fostering Hampshire Children, where our role is to find caring and compassionate people in Hampshire, to look after some of the most vulnerable children at a time when they are not able to live with their parents.

What work does Fostering Hampshire Children do to facilitate matches for children?

We have a very thorough assessment process to get to know those very special individuals who are considering Fostering a child. In this process we try to understand what place they are in as a family, and what commitment is right for them.

When a Foster carer is approved, its worked out what age child and type of care best suits them and their family. They are supported by their social worker who will look at their skills and match them to a child who requires care. I use "family" as a very loose term. The term "family" can be a person on their own, with friends around them, a couple, and people with or without existing children.

What are the different types of Fostering?

There are lots of different ways people can care for children which can range for a few days up to a few years. It can be a full time commitment up to the age of 18, or for a few weeks while we are considering the best long term

solution for a child who is unable to be at home in that moment in time.

When someone wants to learn more about becoming a Foster carer, how can they do that?

There are lots of myths around who can Foster and the 'ideal' type of Foster carer. We are governed by the Fostering regulations which dictates that anyone who is a Foster carer must be over the age of 21 and they must also have a spare bedroom and that bedroom is for the child they are caring for, so that child has a place of their own.

We often hear that people think they cannot Foster if they are single, or in a same sex relationship, or have certain cultural or religious beliefs.



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But actually we do not discriminate within our service.

We would love to have anyone who would like to care for another child. The main criteria is really to want to care for another child, love them, and make them a part of the family. That is the most important aspect that anyone could bring to Fostering.

What impact has Covid-19 had on Fostering Hampshire Children?

There were lots of impacts. There were people who had begun the process to becoming Foster carers, who decided to remove themselves from the process due to the huge amount of uncertainty we all faced in the last two years.

As a local authority the number of children we are caring for dramatically increased as a result of Covid-19. The numbers of children we need to support has an impact on the numbers of Foster carers needed to support them to prevent them from

going out of our local authority so that local people are caring for local children.

Fostering fortnight is taking place now. Tell us how that's going and what it's about.

It's going really well. We are out dispelling some of those myths about Fostering in the community. We have lots of leaflets to hand out and brilliant materials available on our website.

There are case studies which are the words of Foster carers about what being a Foster carer is really about, for people to get a good insight from those actually doing it.

We also have lots of events for our Foster carers in the community taking place and acting as a social framework for the carers to meet and share experiences and support one another which we're really excited about.

Can you explain what a Hive is to those who don't know.

A Hive is linked to our support network called the Hampshire Hives. It's an acknowledgement that Foster Carers do a tough job and they need support too in the role they do. We have created local, small groups who support one another like friends and family do. We want those Foster carers in that group to be able to call one another when they need to. There is one lead person for each group who is employed by Hampshire, who is trained and able to pass on their knowledge and experience to others in their Hive.

It's about building a community, sharing ideas and modelling things to one another. Just feeling like you're not alone and there's someone there to ask a question to and have your back. Also they are there for social things with no connection to Fostering, for the wellbeing aspect such as going out for walks or doing crafts.



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Also they are there for social things with no connection to Fostering, for the wellbeing aspect such as going out for walks or doing crafts. Anything to take a break from the Fostering role is really important and the Hives are something we're really proud of.

What support do you get from Winchester Round Table?

Fostering Hampshire Children is part of the Local Authority and we want to spread the word about the need for Foster carers and we want to engage with local communities to get the message out there.

Working alongside the Round Table is a great way to distribute our message and marketing materials, but also to support the Foster carers and the Foster children by providing them with access to activities they might not otherwise have.

Winchester Round Table run the Santa Sleigh in December every year throughout the district and the Bonfire & Fireworks in November

and the children have often never experienced anything like that before. These experiences and great community spirit shown by the Round Table is always really good for the children.

What advice would you give to anyone who is interested in Fostering?

You might have questions if you're thinking about becoming a Foster carer, or wondering if it is the right time for you.

We have a dedicated website where you can look up the case studies on what it's like to be a Foster carer on there. We have an information pack which sets out all the basic information about becoming a Foster carer and I recommend downloading that as a great first step.

The website also shows the dates we are running events in the community and our drop in sessions where we have a Foster carer and a member of our team there ready to talk with you

in person, and chat informally with no commitment about what Fostering is.

Our website is
www.hants.gov.uk/fostering

We are also available during office hours to people on the phone who wish to call us.

Our telephone number is
0300 555 1384



Winchester Round Table
www.winchesterroundtable.co.uk