

## **FOSTERING FRIENDLY POLICY**

This policy applies to: Devon County Council employees but excludes teachers and school-based staff

**Guidance Date: August 2022**  
**Version Date: August 2022**

**If you require further help in interpretation of this guidance document, you can contact HR Direct on 01392 385555**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Devon County Council recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. We understand that foster carers who do other work in addition to fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements to meet the needs of their fostered child.

Every day there are over 70,000 children living with almost 56,000 foster families in the UK. Every 20 minutes another child comes into care needing a foster family and therefore we recognise the need to do more to help recruit new foster carers. Foster families give children the love, support, and stability that they so desperately need. This is often their first positive experience of family life

To address the national challenges around fostering, and to try and encourage more working people to become foster carers, the Government has called on employers to become “fostering friendly”. Part of the national push to encourage more people to become foster carers, has been to “bust the myth” that you are not allowed to work if you become a foster carer.

Devon County Council as a corporate parent, is committed to supporting employees who are prospective foster carers and also support those already providing care by providing time off where necessary. We will do this, wherever possible, by creating a fostering friendly organisation that offers flexible working arrangements which respond to the needs of all foster carers or approved kinship carer employees. We recognise that by having the support of the Council, may make the difference when our employees are making that vital decision to become a foster carer. The Council will encourage partners and other organisations to adopt this approach.

Fostering is often referred to as one of the most fulfilling professions. Not only will staff receive a generous allowance that will supplement normal DCC salaries, but they will also receive ongoing training and development with exceptional support. Having a child included in a loving household can alter their perspective and change the entire course of their lives.

## 2.0 Aim

The aim of this policy is to support those employees who are already foster carers and to encourage those who may be considering foster care to take that step as by doing so, they will be providing positive working role models and widening the pool of available foster carers

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This policy sets out the additional time off that we will offer prospective and existing foster carers, DYPAS carers and connected carers.

### **3.0 Scope**

The policy applies to all employees of Devon County Council including temporary but excludes teachers and schools-based staff, however, Head Teachers and Governing bodies are recommended to adopt this policy.

### **4.0 Time off**

An employee of Devon County Council who is applying to become an approved foster carer within Devon may be granted up to 5 days leave with pay (pro rata for part time employees) as part of the fostering preparation and assessment process. This leave can be taken as half days where appropriate. Where a couple are applying to become foster carers, and both are employees of the Council, the leave entitlement will apply to each partner.

An employee who is an approved foster carer may be granted an additional 5 days leave per year (pro rata for part time employees) to attend training related to their position as foster carers and/or to attend meetings, panels, hearings, or any other key events in support of foster children and young people in their care

The employee's line manager will approve the leave on a discretionary basis considering individual circumstances of each case and operational requirements of the business.

### **5.0 Flexible working**

Managers should adopt a flexible and accommodating approach to requests for time off, leave and flexible working arrangements from foster carers and prospective foster carers in relation to their care of a looked after child or during their journey through the process to become a foster carer.

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Our [Agile Working policy](#) sets out the Devon County Council (DCC) approach to agile working and supports managers and employees to have open and honest conversations around working more flexibly.

Our [Working hours policy](#) provides further flexibility around how and when work can be done to enable employees to manage their work/life balance in the best way possible.

Further support to cover any extra training which may be needed or to cover unforeseen emergencies related to their fostering role remains at their line manager's discretion.

## 6.0 Procedures

Requests for paid leave will be managed through the Council's i-trent using the "Paid Special Leave" option and approved by their line manager.

Any abuse of the Procedures within this Policy will be dealt with through the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

## 7.0 Support

Advice and support for those with management responsibility for employees wanting to foster for Devon County Council can be sought from:

- HR Direct on 01392 385555 or email [hrdirect-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:hrdirect-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)
- Devon County Council's Fostering Service on 0345 155 1077 or email [foster@devon.gov.uk](mailto:foster@devon.gov.uk)

## 8.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Devon County Council recognises the positive value of diversity, promotes equality and challenges unfair discrimination. We will not discriminate or tolerate discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or any other relevant factor in any aspect of employment.

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