

What happens if I want to become a foster carer for Southend

Step 1

Contact us either by phone, e-mail or in person:

Phone : 01702 212938
e-mail: fostering@southend.gov.uk
online: Foster carer enquiry form ([link to online form](#))
In person: Civic Offices, Victoria Avenue, Southend

The recruitment officer will send you the information pack which will give you general information about fostering for us. The pack includes a contact number so that you can call us to ask any questions.

At the back of the information pack, you will find a form called “Foster carer initial enquiry form.” Once we receive this signed form back from you, you will formally enter **stage 1**.

Stage 1

During Stage 1:

- We will undertake all statutory checks including a criminal records check (now called DBS, Disclosure and Barring Service).
- We will visit three people that you have given us as personal references
- Contact any previous partners and adult children
- Contact any previous fostering agency that you have worked for in the last 12 months
- Confirm the outcome of any application you have made to foster or adopt or for registration as an early years or later year provider in the past
- Confirm personal information about you and your family
- You will have a medical.

If at any stage during this process we decide not to proceed with your application, we will write to you giving you full reasons for our decision.

- We will let you know in writing, no later than **10 working days** of us receiving back all necessary checks under **Stage 1**, to you to let you know if we will be continuing to **Stage 2**.
- If we decide not to continue with your application or you are unhappy with the way your case has been handled, we will give you details of how to complain via our formal complaints procedure.
- Any complaint is about the process and not about the decision made.

Stage 2

Stage 1 of the assessment process provides us with basic information to find out if you would be suitable to foster for Southend.

More detailed information is collected in Stage 2.

In Stage 2, we will look with you at a number of areas in more detail such as:

- Personal family and religious persuasion information
- Employment past and present
- Previous experience of caring for children

You will also attend 3 days Skills to foster training course that is mandatory for both adults where you are applying as a couple.

- If, before the assessment is complete, information comes to light indicating that you are unlikely to be suitable to foster, a 'brief report' will be compiled setting out details of the assessment and the reasons for we consider you to be unsuitable.
- Should this happen, you will be notified at told that the report is to be sent to panel.
- You will be provided with a copy of the report and given 10 working days to comment on the report in writing.
- The fostering panel will make a recommendation to the decision maker who will make the final decision on whether to continue with your assessment.

It is slightly confusing, but **Stage 1** and **Stage 2** will be carried out in parallel.

- If we decide not to continue solely from information provided during the Stage 1, no report will be presented to panel and you will receive only the letter from the decision maker.
- After 10 working days of the Stage 1 checks are complete, you are considered to be in Stage 2. At that stage, if the decision maker determines that you are unsuitable to foster, a report would need to be presented to panel.
- Upon completion of Stage 2, a written report covering both Stages 1 and 2 will be compiled with recommendations as to suitability and any terms of approval.
- You will be given a copy of the full report and will have 10 working days to send your observations for panel.
- As we will have completed this report with you, there should not be any surprises at this stage.

The Fostering Panel

- The full assessment should be presented at panel no longer than 8 months from the time that you first apply.
- You will be invited to attend the Fostering Panel along with your assessing social worker.
- You will usually be told, on the day, whether the panel recommends your approval.
- You will then receive formal notification of the decision within around two weeks of the panel.
- Once you are formally informed in writing that you have successfully completed Stage 1, should you not agree with the decision of the decision maker, then you can apply to the Independent Review Mechanism. We will give you all of the details that you require regarding this should the situation arise.

Hopefully you will be successful in being approved and then you will soon receive the call that you have been waiting for... we have a child who needs you!!