

**New campaign to bust myths on fostering launches**

'No Myths, No Ifs, No Buts...' is the latest campaign to help find foster families for some of the county's most vulnerable children.

The latest campaign, being led by Staffordshire foster carers aims to find families for the 1,200 children now in the county council's care.

As part of the month-long campaign, the team have set out to help bust some of the commonly held myths putting people off fostering.

Some of the most commonly held myths around fostering are that, you need to be married, you need lots of experience and skills, you can't have any animals and you need a big house none of which are true.

Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People at Staffordshire County Council said: "With children back in school for the new term and teenagers flying the nest and off to university, it can be a good time to think about doing something different and that could mean being a foster carer.

"Our foster carers regularly tell us that fostering is an amazing thing to do but we know there are still lots of myths out there putting people off. For example, people think you need to be married, own your own home and you can't own a pet, all of which are false.

"That's why we're busting those popular myths and trying to encourage more families to come forward. We know that fostering gives most children the best chance of a happy life, so it's vital we have local foster carers to give them that opportunity.

"We'll be busting a myth each day on social media, and you can help us to spread the word by liking and sharing our posts. And, if you've already thought about fostering before then coming along to one of our informal information events is a great way of taking that first step."

As part of the campaign, a series of coffee mornings and information events with current foster carers will also be taking place at the following locations:

- Friday 13 September, 10am-12pm, Costa Coffee (near M & S), Ventura Retail Park, Tamworth.
- Thursday 19 September, 7pm, Staffordshire County Council, N01 Staffordshire Place, Tipping Street, Stafford.
- Friday 20 September, 10am-12pm, Costa Coffee, 28 Market Place, Leek.
- Friday 27 September 10am-2pm, Costa Coffee, Queens Retail Park, Stafford.
- Wednesday 9 October, 7pm, Castle Hotel, Lady Bank, Tamworth.

Newcastle-under-Lyme foster carers Brian & Sandra Thompson have been fostering for 20 years. Brian said: "Fostering is a really amazing and rewarding thing to do and we're always pleased to share our fostering experiences with those who are thinking about starting.

"It really is so rewarding although it's not without its challenges. But we would never change things and the rewards always outweigh the challenges. There's also lots of different types of fostering too, so there will definitely be an option that suits your family life."

Kelly Hyden from Stafford said: "I've been fostering for around 17 years now and it's a fab thing to do.

"Over that time I have specialised in looking after teenagers and have probably fostered over 60 children. It isn't always easy though and has its challenges but there is plenty of help and support available."

Rugeley foster carer Siobhan Palmer-Burke is 27 years old and is one of the county council's youngest foster carers.

Siobhan said: "I've only been fostering for a few months now, but I am really enjoying it and it's an absolutely great thing to do.

"There's a really friendly fostering community here in Staffordshire and you're never on your own. Other foster carers are always willing to give advice and help each other out. Add to that the support from the council's fostering team and you really couldn't ask for a better fostering experience."

Jackie Meredith from Stafford who previously fostered for an independent agency said: "Fostering is a really wonderful thing to do and I'd encourage anyone who's thinking about it to come and join us at one of the coffee mornings and events. It's a great way of finding out exactly what's involved and maybe taking that first step.

"We transferred to Staffordshire County Council because we had heard about all the training and support available which really makes a huge difference. Fostering isn't always plain sailing though and there will be challenges along the way. But it is great to see children grow and learn new things. And, the positives always outweigh the negatives."

Staffordshire Moorlands foster family Nicola and Matt Bradley along with their 7-year-old daughter Amelia specialise in fostering sibling groups and said: "We've been fostering for 6 years now and have loved every minute of it. I think it's important that siblings stay together and it's fabulous to watch them grow up together.

"Fostering is something that will change your life and if you are thinking about it then I would encourage you to get in touch and take that first step."

Burton foster family Kris and Laura Adcock said: "We have been fostering for three years now and it has been the most exciting and rewarding adventure. We have learnt so much about ourselves and been rewarded by seeing the young people in our care flourish. There is lots of support from Staffordshire and other carers, you never feel like you are doing it on your own."

Cannock foster carer Phil Beard said: "I'd definitely encourage people to come forward and become a foster carer. It's a great thing to do and at the end of the day you can see the difference you made for that child, and the life that child can have."

"I'd definitely recommend people go along to the fostering information evenings, you get to meet other foster carers and hear exactly what's involved. You'll also get the chance to talk to staff about all the great training that is available too."

Tanya Budd from Lichfield has been fostering for eight years and is supporting this year's Foster Care Fortnight. Tanya said: "Fostering is such a great thing to do and I find it really rewarding especially when you see vulnerable children grow up to be strong independent adults. It makes fostering the greatest job in the world. There's also lots of support and training available from Staffordshire's fostering service too, so there's always help and advice when you need it."

"The most rewarding thing for me is how much the children change while they are with you and how much they appreciate what you're doing for them. It's wonderful to see all their achievements, no matter how small, like succeeding in school and in life in general."

For information about fostering with Staffordshire County Council visit [www.care4child.org/fostering](http://www.care4child.org/fostering)

Ends

Photo captions:

Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People at Staffordshire County Council

Left to right: Foster carer Kathryn English, fostering recruitment officer Emma Howitt and foster carer Kelly Hyden

One of the fostering myths being busted

