

Surrey needs more foster carers

7 November 2024



Fostering can mean everything to those involved; that is the message of a powerful new fostering film from over 100 councils.

'Everything', a new fostering recruitment film, will have its Surrey premier at a private screening and fostering information session at Nova Cinema, Woking, on Thursday 14 November.

As well as celebrating our existing community of Surrey foster carers, the event will offer residents who may be considering fostering the opportunity to learn all about the fostering journey. A panel discussion with foster carers, care experienced young people and fostering staff will provide the opportunity for questions, as well as to hear directly from those with first-hand experience of the power becoming a foster carer has to transform lives. Not just those of children being fostered, but of the foster carers and their families too.

Highlighting the need for more foster carers in Surrey, **Councillor Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning**, said;

"At Surrey County Council we have over 1,000 children in our care and we currently have just under 400 foster families. We want children to live and thrive in homes within the county, where this is in the right thing for them. While 42% of fostered children in Surrey live with our foster carers within the geographical borders of the county, our aim is that by 2030 that number will be up to 65%."

"The 'Everything' project has given our fostering service an amazing film that shows the long-term impact that fostering can have, with relationships between carers and children lasting well into adulthood. Every council wants to recruit more foster carers, and by collaborating to produce this emotionally powerful film, we can show people how rewarding and life-changing being a foster carer can be."

"The message is the same for all of us - we need more people to step forward and become foster carers. 'Everything' will help us to reach more people in our communities and encourage them to find out more about this really rewarding role."

"We are committed to giving the vulnerable children and young people we care for the best chance to thrive, and for the vast majority of them that would be to live with a local fostering family. Our ambition is for at least 30 new foster families across Surrey to join us by the end of March 2025."

Children who enter the care system have often experienced trauma and instability in their lives, and a caring, stable foster family can make a significant difference in their wellbeing and development.

Nationally, there are currently over 70,000 children living with around 56,000 foster families in the UK. However, there is still a significant shortage of foster carers, with around 9,265 new foster families needed in the next year alone.

To learn more about fostering for Surrey, **register online for your free place** at our fostering information session on 14 November, or visit **Fostering - Surrey County Council**.

The 'Everything' film

'Everything' is the seventh film produced by a growing partnership of councils and children's trusts to promote local authority fostering. The 'Everything' project is the largest collaboration yet, with participants from Cumbria to Devon and Lancashire to Essex.

'Everything' follows foster carer Mike and his family on a journey through time with two of the children they have looked after, who are now adults. A surprise 60th birthday party for Mike gives Will and Zara a chance to reflect on how being fostered made a difference to their lives, thanking him for everything.

Thanks to footage shot on a genuine old camcorder, we are taken to the 1990s, to see how Will settles into the family. We also jump back to the 2010s, when a young Zara is being taught to play the guitar by Mike, something that comes full circle when she performs a song at the party. Mike's son Chris is involved throughout, showing the important role the children of foster carers play.

The concluding message of the film is that what you do with your life could forever change someone else's - encouraging people to foster in order to make that change.

The film was developed with the input and insight of foster carers and people with care experience, was produced by Reel TwentyFive and project managed by public sector media partner CAN/Rachel Brown. Project Director, Rachel Brown describes the main message of the film: *"Many people don't realise how common it is for relationships made through*

fostering to last well beyond the 'official' caring role. This has a huge impact on the lives of those who have been fostered, giving them stability and security well into adulthood.

"We also wanted to reflect how the children of foster carers make a difference to children when they come into care, helping them to feel part of the family.

"Having over 100 councils taking part in the project, the film will reach a very wide audience, encouraging people to find out more and take the steps towards becoming a foster carer.

"Fostering with your local council or children's trust means you can better support local children and young people who need a safe and nurturing home where they can grow and thrive."

Sarah Thomas, chief executive of the Fostering Network says: *"The Fostering Network has been proud to support the collaborative film projects since 'Giants' in 2017. It's great to see local authority fostering services pooling resources to produce another amazing film. 'Everything' will help to amplify their message about the chronic shortage of fostering households, encouraging more people to come forward and foster."*