

PRESS RELEASE

Carers speak up for fostering in Foster Care Fortnight

A dedicated fostering couple are urging people to make a difference to a child's life and find out about the benefits of fostering with Essex County Council.

Pearl and Nigel Hakes, from Danbury, have first-hand experience helping to transform the lives of children and are supporting Essex County Council's drive to find 100 new foster carers.

Foster Care Fortnight is the annual awareness campaign run by UK charity the Fostering Network and throughout the campaign Essex County Council is staging a number of information events where foster carers like Pearl and Nigel will be present to speak to anyone who is interested in finding out more information.

During Foster Care Fortnight the Council is especially calling out to people whose children have grown up and left home and who are missing the buzz of family life, and to younger parents who love family life and who could make a difference to another child's life.

Pearl and Nigel Hakes, who have five grown-up children between them, decided to foster when they were in their mid-fifties about 11 years ago. They foster through the council's Fostering Service, which is seeing the number of children requiring a home growing steadily.

The Hakes decided to look after children with disabilities and chose to offer respite care to see if they liked it. Their passion for the job took them by surprise and they soon asked to foster children on a long-term basis.

Now they look after two children with learning disabilities. Pearl said: "We love life with them. It's hard work but also very rewarding. Things that they do you would probably take for granted with another child but for us it is quite a big deal.

"The county council gives you a lot of support and training and there are carers' groups you can access. We think it's the better option to foster through the council rather than an outside agency because of this support.

"It is such a rewarding career but if you are on the cusp of deciding, at least try respite or short-term care because it gives you a feel of what is right for you."

There are now 1,070 children in foster care in Essex and this number has been increasing for the past two years. In addition, the rate of children leaving care has slowed down, bringing into sharp focus the need to recruit more foster carers for children of all ages, siblings and children with disabilities.

Corrie Castleman, Fostering Team Manager at Essex County Council, said: "We need more people to welcome a child into their family as every vulnerable child in Essex needs a safe, supportive and fun-loving home to inspire our children to become well-adjusted young adults that can positively contribute to society.

"You could make a difference to a child's life. Please contact our friendly team to answer any concerns you may have. Don't just think you will not be suitable or needed."

To talk to people like the Hakes and find out about some of the children you could help, visit www.essexadoptionandfostering.co.uk/fostering or attend a Drop-In Fostering Information Event on Saturday 6 July, 1.30pm to 3.30pm, Broomfield Village Hall, CM1 7AH or Saturday 21 September, 11am to 1pm, Essex County Cricket Club, CM2 0PG or Saturday 12 October, 11am to 1pm, Roundwood Garden Centre & Café, Braintree, CM7 5LJ.

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(Picture credit Gregg Brown/ copyright Essex County Council)



Caption: Foster carers Pearl and Nigel Hakes

Notes to editors:

- For more information about fostering and to see the range of events taking place across the county visit www.essexadoptionandfostering.co.uk/fostering or call 0800 801 530.
- Over 7,000 new foster families are needed in the next 12 months in the UK to care for a range of children.
- A high proportion of children who come into care in Essex are aged ten and over so there is also a particular need for foster carers who can provide homes for older children, as well as those who can accommodate sibling groups and children with disabilities.