



Somerset Liberal Democrats
Chard South
 November 2024

Everybody Knows somebody who would make a great Foster Carer

Everybody knows somebody who would make a great foster carer. At a recent Executive meeting we were told “Some progress has been made in recruiting Somerset Council foster carers with an increase of 10 households in 23/24, as planned. However there remain insufficient foster carers inhouse and in the independent sector to meet need, which means some children are living in residential care, both in and out of county when they need a local foster home.”



Clearly some amazing work is being done to recruit and retain foster carers, from information sessions and Pride events to television ads and social media – they have shared our highly visible message that has already been seen by many. But put simply – we still do not have enough foster carers for the rising need we are seeing.

My colleague Councillor Heather Shearer, Lead Member for Children, Families and Education, commented that we currently have 33 children in residential settings that would be more appropriately looked after in foster homes, she said we know that finding a supportive home for a local child is the best thing for them. So, I am asking for your help in amplifying the messages that our team are sending out. We have 278 City, Town and Parish Councils in Somerset, thousands of council employees, countless community organisations from Carnival Clubs to uniformed organisations who have powerful voices. We all need to do everything we can to encourage Somerset families to consider becoming foster carers. As our campaign slogan says, this is your chance to change a child’s story and have a positive impact on their life and future. I urge everyone to spread the word by sharing details of our adverts and information events.

If you, or any one you know, has ever considered fostering, please get in touch to find out more about this hugely rewarding role. A stable foster home with a nurturing family provides the very best environment for most young people in care, meaning they can remain in their local community, surrounded by the faces and places they know. Foster caring is a rewarding role, with full training and support provided, including financial support in the form of weekly payments. There are a variety of fostering roles available, from full time care of a child to more flexible options like occasional care: providing foster care just one evening a week, or one weekend a month.

November is Men's Mental Health Month

We want to remind every male, not just today, your life matters. Even when things feel hopeless and dark, don't give up, you've come this far for a reason. You have the strength to get through any inner battle you're facing, and remember, you are never alone. You have a purpose, and people who know you care for you, even when your brain tells you otherwise. Samaritans Charity call 116 123, its good to talk



Recycle More

Following the success of expanded Recycle More collections, Somerset Council successfully bid to be part of the national 'FlexCollect' kerbside collection trial of these plastic bags and wrapping. In its first year, the Frome trailed this project and has seen 27 tonnes of soft plastic recycling – about 95,000 collection bags.



The collections pick up a wide range of plastic bags and wrapping, including carrier bags, bread bags, confectionary wrappers, crisp packets, food wrapping and cling film. The plastics will be part of the usual weekly recycling collections, to be put out for collection in the plastic sacks provided to participating households. At present, the only way to recycle plastic bags and wrapping is at supermarket front of store collection points. The trial is part of a larger £3m Flexible Plastic Fund 'FlexCollect' project, which involves nine local authorities across England, and aims to inform government and industry on how plastic bags and wrapping should be added to existing household collection services.

In May 2024 the Government announced new 'Simpler Recycling' changes for England. Along with the same set of materials being collected across England by March 2025, the collection of plastic bags and wrapping from the kerbside is to be introduced by March 2027.

Chard CommuniTea Waffle

Chard CommuniTEA Waffle is a non-profit organisation which will provide space for individuals and groups to meet for free. One of the directors, Cllr Jason Baker, said: "We found a lot of people, especially older people, were lonely and workspace stuck for somewhere to go. "We knew of a similar project in a town quite close to us and we thought we would see how we could replicate that here in Chard."



Cllr Jason Baker said it has taken months of hard work and dedication to get the cafe on Holyrood Street in Chard open. "To have people sat down and enjoying the works of our labour is amazing," he added. The cafe also offers a "community table" to encourage conversation, a family room and workspace. "We also wanted a space for looked after children and contact workers so that we can work closer with social services to make a local area where people can meet."

The community cafe will also host Somerset Village and Community Agents, which provides advice and support, and he is in the café from 10am until 12pm every Wednesday. The village agent for Chard, Peter Collar said: "The idea is that local people can seek us out if they need face-to-face support. "It's lovely we can base ourselves in a place where people can come and find us." We aim to support our community and surrounding areas as much as possible and during half we term we decided that "Kids eat Free" and during this week we gave away 82 children's waffles, We are proud to be able to support families where we can and make going out for a treat that little bit more affordable. The cafe offers some amazing waffles both sweet and savoury as well as delicious home-made cake and waffled sandwiches and fries.

If you would like to find out more or would like to volunteer with us, please pop in and have a chat.

Keeping in Contact

**COME AND TALK WITH US
AT A LIB DEM SURGERY**

FIRST SATURDAY IN THE MONTH

With your Town and Unitary Councillors

AT THE GUILDHALL, CHARD



10am to 12pm

You can meet with me to discuss any concerns or for help by dropping into our monthly surgery or I can arrange an appointment on a day and time that suits you or feel free to give me a call on 07736 310805 or email Jason.baker@somerset.gov.uk