



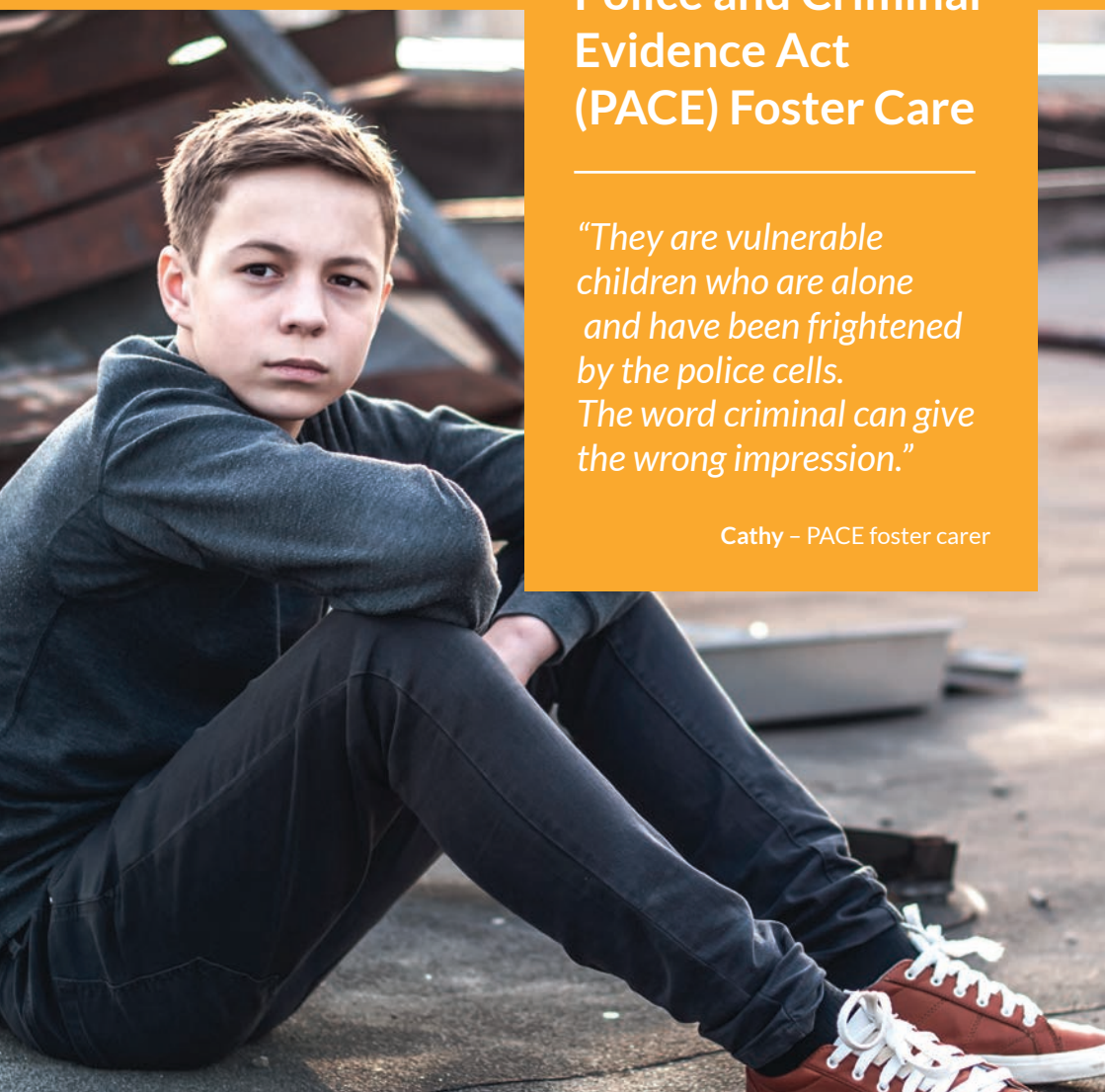
# Suffolk Fostering & Adoption

## Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) Foster Care

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*“They are vulnerable children who are alone and have been frightened by the police cells. The word criminal can give the wrong impression.”*

Cathy – PACE foster carer



**A PACE foster carer** is a foster carer who offers overnight care to a child who has been arrested instead of them remaining in police custody overnight.

The role of the foster carer is to look after the child for the night and ensure they are ready for court the next morning. This is specialist, fee paid foster caring and could be compatible with full-time employment.



Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE), children age 17 and under, wherever possible, should not be detained in police cells overnight.

When a young person is arrested for an offence at night, and the police decide that the young person needs to appear before the court the next morning, the police will ring children's services and ask to use the PACE foster care bed for the night. If the child poses a very serious risk the police would not request PACE bed. Usually the expectation is that no child should be held in a police cell overnight.

The PACE carer will collect the young person from the police station and the young person will spend the night in the carer's home. The carer is then expected to take the young person to court, or to the appropriate Youth Offending Service office, the following morning.

PACE carers are on duty for **7 consecutive nights** on a **4 week** rolling programme. When they are on duty, PACE carers are expected to be ready to receive a young person at very short notice. However, currently in Suffolk the PACE bed is needed less than once a week on average.

One common reason for needing to provide a placement is that a young person has carried out criminal damage at home, parents often later regret pressing charges. Young people in need of a PACE bed are often in crisis and having difficulties at home.

*Whilst on duty,  
PACE carers are paid  
a retainer fee of  
**£250 per week.***

*Carers are then paid  
a nightly fee consistent  
with a Specialist  
Level 5 fee.*

*This can be up to an  
**additional £87**  
per night for any  
young person placed  
under PACE.*

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# ROLE OF THE PACE FOSTER CARER

- To pick the child up from the police station. Provide the child with overnight accommodation and take the child to court or to a Youth Offending Service office the following working day.
  - The foster carer would not be expected to pick the child up before the end of the Social Care working day. The foster carer is unlikely to be asked to take a child in the early hours of the morning except if the child is very young or particularly vulnerable in a police cell.
  - The Foster carer would not be expected to act as an appropriate adult, or remain with the child the following day. Their role would stop once they have transported the child to court, or to a representative from the Youth Offending Service.
- The foster carer would not be expected to restrain the child in any way and would be subject to all the usual fostering regulations and expectations.
  - Should the child run away, the foster carer would report the child missing immediately to the referring police station.
  - To make themselves available for supervision with their social worker.
  - To attend relevant PACE bed scheme meetings and training.



# PACE FOSTER CARER TRAINING

PACE foster carers will access the same preparation training as mainstream foster carers together with additional specialist training, to include:

- Legal training on PACE and court process.
- Adolescent brain development training (to include addictions and risk taking behaviours).
- Unisafe course. 1 day course provided to all carers on de-escalation techniques.

# TO BE A PACE CARER YOU NEED TO HAVE

- No other vulnerable children or vulnerable adults in your household.
- Ideally 2 adults over the age of 21 to be available if a child is placed overnight. However, single carers with relevant skills and experience will be considered.
- Capacity to drive countywide in order to pick up the young person and drop them off at court the next day.
- Experience and understanding of children with challenging or offending behaviours.

***Foster carers who are also employees of Suffolk County Council can benefit from SCC's Foster Carers Leave Policy.***

## **IT IS HELPFUL IF YOU HAVE:**

- A flexible employer to enable you to transport the young person wherever necessary in the morning following their arrest.
- Experience of caring for, or working with, challenging young people or experience of working within the criminal justice system.

PACE carers are subject to the same assessment process, references and checks as mainstream foster carers. Foster carers will be allocated a supervising social worker. They will receive regular supervision and annual reviews of their registration in line with usual fostering regulation.

There will be regular training and support groups for all PACE foster carers.

# CATHY'S STORY

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Cathy is a PACE carer from Norfolk. She is retired and PACE caring suits her lifestyle though she feels it would also be a good way into fostering. She has had 8 PACE placements, all boys aged between 15 and 17 years. Here Cathy shares her experience:

**"As a PACE carer, I have never felt worried or intimidated.**

Being arrested can be a very scary thing and the young people are generally tired and emotionally drained when they arrive. They are so tired and so happy not to be in a police cell that they just go straight to bed. They are just vulnerable children who are alone and have been frightened by the police cells. I expected some rudeness and hostility from the young people at first, they have actually all been well behaved. The word 'criminal' can give the wrong impression.

Before they arrive I make sure that their bed and basic toiletries are ready for them. I will always offer them a shower and something to eat.

The young people are usually allowed to ring their parents though I am very strict about not letting them use the internet. Remembering they are still in custody is important, firm boundaries are still needed. In the morning, I wake them up and will always offer them breakfast. Sometimes I get them a bacon roll on the way to court. My involvement with the young people ends when we arrive at court the next morning.

**I know that the police wouldn't bring a young person to my home if they were going to be too much trouble and would always pick them up again if necessary.**

I really enjoy the unpredictability of the role and the instant impact that I can have on a young person's life. **I feel very strongly that being a PACE carer does offer a young person insight into an alternative to crime,** it can be foster care. One PACE bed could be enough to break a pattern"

A stylized orange logo consisting of a central semi-circle with a textured, brushstroke-like appearance, surrounded by several small circular icons representing people and objects.

**Suffolk**  
Fostering & Adoption

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