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| **From:** | **Fostering Service** |

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| **To:** | **All Somerset Clerks** |

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| **Date:** | **22 December 2023** |

**Help us share ‘Willow’s Story’ this Christmas & New Year**

Over 500 local children will not celebrate Christmas Day at home with their parents and birth families this year. However, you have the potential to make a difference to the life of a vulnerable young person year-round and change a child’s story, as a Somerset foster carer.

This is the powerful and emotive message behind a new short film from Somerset Council’s Fostering Service, which aims to highlight the urgent need for more foster carers in Somerset, whilst encouraging families and individuals with room in their homes and hearts to consider fostering.

‘Willow’s Story’ is the third instalment in the ‘Change A Child’s Story’ series from Fostering In Somerset; a 50 second promotional video, soon to be seen on television screens across the county over Christmas and New Year.

The film will air on ITV and ITVx from 20 December 2023 until 31 January 2024, and we need the help of our City, Town and Parish Councils to share the film and important message across communities.

Watch Willow’s Story here: [https://youtu.be/nObh67fPpC4](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FnObh67fPpC4&data=05%7C02%7Cjade.chant%40somerset.gov.uk%7C9ee664b3a77649534d5408dbfa4ed6c2%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C638378988755244224%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=1wGl5fl6ADtgDlgnkyl2o9gtCP88Tpc4FUHYzbF0MEs%3D&reserved=0).

With over 580 children in Somerset in care, and only 200 in-house foster carers, there are not enough foster homes to provide stability and safety for vulnerable children of all ages.

Keeping local children in their local community is not only better for the child, but also reduces the number of external placements, providing significant cost savings for Somerset Council.

**How you can support**

* Engage with and share posts from the @FosteringInSomerset Facebook and Instagram pages.
* Post Willow’s Story onto your community social media pages (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X etc.) and tag @FosteringInSomerset.
* Display ‘Willow’s Story’ on digital screens in your community spaces.
* Display posters and leaflets in your community spaces.
* Invite us to attend your events or meeting so we can promote Willow’s Story and Fostering in Somerset.

Foster carers need to be over 21 with a spare room in their home, but there is no upper age limit (wisdom and experience is a bonus). Foster carers receive weekly payments with full training and ongoing support provided.

There are many different types of fostering, including occasional care – caring for a child one night a week or one weekend a month, to a High Need foster carer which provides long-term homes for Somerset’s most complex children.

Remember, local children are in need of local homes, so they can stay in their communities surrounded by the faces and places they know.

For more information about fostering, visit [www.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cjade.chant%40somerset.gov.uk%7C701bc147794a4d2da04608dbfa4f139d%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C638378989761357365%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Isun1%2B4owti4K1czWL1oRFQEgXCPIHdkrRrPMh406fA%3D&reserved=0) or call 0800 587 9900.

**Follow us on social media**

* Facebook: @FosteringInSomerset [www.facebook.com/fosteringinsomerset](https://www.facebook.com/fosteringinsomerset)
* Instagram: @FosteringInSomerset [www.instagram.com/fosteringinsomerset](http://www.instagram.com/fosteringinsomerset/)

**For more information**

If you would like to support fostering recruitment further, or are happy to receive some posters / leaflets / social media assets / extend an invitation to a local event – please contact

Michelle Mitchell, Fostering Communications & Marketing Lead on 01823 355020 or email michelle.mitchell@somerset.gov.uk.

**We will be joining the Parish Clerks working group on 10 January to talk more about the fostering service.**

***See you there!***