



Family
Fostering

Become a fabulous
FOSTER CARER

Information pack for
prospective foster carers



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Introduction to Family Fostering

Family Fostering was established in 2014 by Debi Atkin and Teresa Morgan, both professionally qualified, registered social workers, with over 40 collective years of experience in fostering. Their shared vision and passion for empowering foster carers and improving outcomes for children and young people was their inspiration for setting up their own bespoke fostering service based in Kent.

Family Fostering is a small, family orientated fostering service with a therapeutic ethos. It provides specialist and personalised care and support for foster carers, in full recognition of the complexities involved in fostering, and acknowledgement of the valuable role foster carers' play in supporting children and young people.

Debi and Teresa are both actively involved in the day to day running of the service, Debi as the Head of Service and Teresa as the Service Manager and Responsible Individual.

Mission Statement

“To provide our fostering families with a secure base within which they are equipped and enabled to provide safe, nurturing, and loving homes to young people unable to live with their birth families. Working holistically with a therapeutic ethos we will ensure that each child/young person is fully supported through their psychological recovery, enabled to build their resilience, and realise their unique potential.”



Meet the Team

We are a small, dedicated team, committed to staying a small service to ensure we can provide personalised, high quality, practical, emotional, and therapeutic support to all our foster carers and the children in their care.

Teresa and Debi have worked together in social care since 1999. They have expertise in all roles within fostering from the assessment and reviewing of foster carers, delivery of training and workshops, day to day support and supervision and management and development of the fostering service. They both also have firsthand experience of being part of a family that fosters.

Debi Atkin- Head of Service



Debi has extensive experience of managing services and supporting children, young people and families. She has been an approved and experienced foster carer and has valuable insight into the realities of fostering and a heart for supporting foster carers in the complex work they do. Debi has worked with children and their families since 1990. She has a Level 7 Diploma in Leadership and Management, a Social Work qualification and is qualified as a Trainer in Skills to Foster. She has worked within the independent fostering sector since 2001 and has been managing fostering services since 2006.

Teresa Morgan - Responsible Individual



Teresa is a qualified social worker with extensive experience of working with children and families since 1994. She has been working within the independent fostering sector since 2002 and has been the Responsible Individual since Family Fostering was first established in 2014. Teresa's parents were foster carers, giving her first-hand experience of being part of a fostering family. She has real insight into the valuable role birth children play in fostering and is passionate about ensuring everyone in the fostering family is fully supported. She is a CEOP Ambassador and a Qualified Trainer in Skills to Foster.

Judith Honor - Registered Manager



Judith is a qualified and highly experienced social worker with previous experience as a Child Protection Social Worker. Judith moved to the independent fostering sector in 2013, firstly as a Supervising Social Worker, before moving into more senior roles. She has a degree in Social Science and Psychology, a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Social Care and is a qualified trainer in Skills to Foster. Judith has her own adult children and grandchildren and loves her family-time spent with them. She is able to combine her own strongly held values around family within her role as registered manager ensuring all children have opportunities to achieve and have the highest level of support and care provided to them.

Chantelle Lacey – Senior Supervising Social Worker & Therapeutic Lead



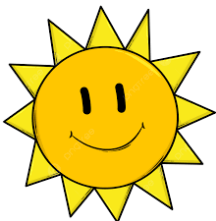
Chantelle is a qualified and highly motivated social worker with a BA honours degree. Chantelle is passionate about ensuring all young people within the service achieve their potential. Chantelle is spontaneous, creative, and full of energy. She is passionate about therapeutic parenting and has achieved the Diploma in Therapeutic Parenting and takes the lead within the service.

Chloe Berry – Supervising Social Worker



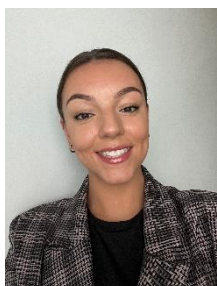
Chloe is an experienced and qualified social worker with 5 years post-qualifying experience. Chloe worked as a Children and Families' Social Worker supporting children in need and children at risk. She then worked within the adolescent team where she has supported young people with complex and diverse social issues including domestic violence, substance misuse, mental health, child sexual exploitation and county lines. Chloe has a genuine desire to empower people to make positive changes in their lives.

Sarah – Supervising Social Worker



Sarah has been a qualified Social Worker since 2001 with her first 3 years working in a Children's and Families Team for a Local Authority. She has worked in fostering ever since as a Supervising Social Worker, Senior Practitioner and an Independent Social Worker. Her practice is underpinned by a therapeutic approach and she is passionate about foster carers receiving the right support to ensure they can provide the best care to their children and young people.

Aoife Cotter – Supervising Social Worker



Aoife is a qualified Social Worker who has worked in the Children in Care Team at the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead prior to her employment at Family Fostering. Through her compassionate approach and dedication, Aoife always tries to create meaningful and lasting change in the lives of those she works with and has a passion for making a positive impact in the lives of diverse children, young people, families and carers.

Laura Young – Social Work Assistant



Laura has over 20 years' experience in social care and has a BA in Counselling, Coaching and Mentoring. She thrives on creative problem-solving, and she has a passion for supporting children, young people and their families with empathy and dedication. Laura's experience includes being a restorative justice facilitator, a mentor in a secondary school and a Social Work Assistant for Strengthening Independence Service for disabled children and young people.

Krista McAllister – Office/Finance Manager



Krista holds a BA Degree and a Diploma in Business Administration/Human Resources. She is a fantastic Office Manager with extensive experience in accounting, human resources and office administration. Krista is also qualified and highly experienced in TEFL. She has a firm grasp on all aspects of the fostering service and her warmth, empathy and humour help to create an office environment of respect, acceptance, understanding and care.

Emeli McCormack – Administrator



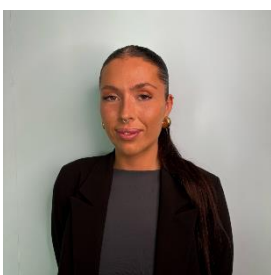
Emeli is an experienced administrator with direct experience working in a fostering environment. She understands the challenges Foster Carers face and what needs to be done to ensure information is received and correctly saved to the relevant files. Emeli is organised and focused and able to deal with competing demands. She brings energy and humour to the role and is always willing to lend a hand and help out where needed.

Amy Cable – Administrator



Amy is a skilled and experienced administrator with a certification in Level 2 and Level 3 Business Administration. She is committed to continual learning and development and has also completed a Level 2 Information, Advice or Guidance course. She is a naturally caring person who loves to help people.

Rebekah Lloyd – Business Development Assistant



Becca has previous experience in owning her own business and running her own company. Her qualifications are in creative arts and business development. She is passionate about fostering growth and building connections and she thrives in the dynamic world of business development. As a dedicated Business Development Assistant, Becca brings a blend of creativity and strategic thinking to the table and is eager to contribute to the expansion and success of Family Fostering.

Our Values

Recognising each individual's unique worth and enabling them to unlock their potential is central to everything we do. This is inclusive to all the children and young people within the service, all our foster carers and all our staff members.

We recognise that all children who are separated from their family have suffered trauma, and this will impact on their development and wellbeing. Caring for traumatised children is complex and demanding and requires foster carers to have key skills, personal qualities, high resilience, and strong support networks.

We value foster carers as fellow professionals and work alongside them, supporting them in every aspect of their fostering role. Our foster carers are uniquely placed to make a life-changing difference to the children placed in their care. This difference is essentially made in the day-to-day care they provide within their homes, where they consistently demonstrate to each child and young person that they are valued. They provide them with the support they need to work through their difficulties and raise their self-esteem, so they have the motivation and resources they need to realise their unique potential.

We strongly believe that children who are unable to return to their birth family should have the stability of a long-term foster family, as this gives the best opportunity to develop secure attachments which are vital to their emotional wellbeing.

Our service to our Foster Carers

We believe the best way of supporting our foster carers in the valuable role they do is by providing them with a personalised, bespoke service where support is tailored to their individual needs and circumstances. To achieve this, supervising social workers will support a maximum of 9 families.

We are committed to remaining a small, independent service where every individual is known to the team so that we can provide an exclusive family feel to all our foster families and the children in their care. We do this by ensuring each foster family has:

- ✓ A dedicated, experienced and caring Supervising Social Worker
- ✓ Monthly supervision and weekly phone contact as a minimum
- ✓ Access to the Senior Management Team
- ✓ Access to therapeutic support from a highly skilled psychotherapist
- ✓ Support for all children, including birth children
- ✓ Monthly coffee mornings for informal support with other foster carers
- ✓ Regular therapeutic workshops with other foster carers
- ✓ Specialist training to develop therapeutic insight into caring for children and young people who have experienced childhood trauma
- ✓ High quality training and support to ensure foster carers achieve the Training Support and Development Standards
- ✓ Honest and open feedback
- ✓ 24-hour support 365 days a year from an experienced Social Worker with fostering expertise
- ✓ Representation at all meetings regarding young people in your care
- ✓ Peer support
- ✓ Social events for all the foster family
- ✓ A minimum of 14 nights short breaks (full fee paid)
- ✓ Payments for up to 6 weeks when no child is placed

We regard every one of our foster carers as fellow professionals and as such ensure that they receive a professional fee and full financial support. As professionals we also ensure that the financial fee acknowledges each foster carer's length of service as well as their expertise by having a tiered fee structure and loyalty bonuses. We hope that our objective matches our foster carer's aspiration to move to the top tier by accessing training, ongoing support and experiential learning and development.

Our financial support includes:

- ✓ A highly competitive weekly allowance for each child £450.00 to £840.00 per week.
- ✓ Reward bonus for 1, 3, 5 and 7 years' service
- ✓ Short stay /support payment (a minimum of 14 nights allowance)
- ✓ Annual holiday payments (£500 per young person)
- ✓ Retainer payment for up to 6 weeks
- ✓ Exceptional needs payments (for those unforeseen circumstances)
- ✓ Fostering Network membership (Organisational)
- ✓ Foster Talk Membership (Individual)
- ✓ National Association of Therapeutic Parents Membership (individual)
- ✓ Full Training Pass with The Trauma Revolution /Inspire Training Group

We strongly believe in working in partnership with our foster carers to deliver effective re-parenting so that the children in their care can experience a positive and restorative family life experience. We also work in partnership with local authorities, schools, therapists and other professionals to help achieve better outcomes for each looked after child and young person in our Service.

We support local community events, resources and organisations and recognise the valuable role they play in supporting and encouraging all children develop important life skills and social engagement. These are a vital part of providing children with a secure base from which they may achieve stability, security, resilience and a true sense of belonging and acceptance, where their worth is fully recognised, and their true potential is unlocked.

What is fostering?

Fostering is providing a safe, stable and nurturing family home to a child who is unable to live with their own birth family. There are many reasons why children are unable to be cared for by their birth families.

- Sometimes families have periods of instability due to life circumstances: emotional, mental and physical health conditions, bereavements, family breakdown, learning difficulties, alcohol dependency, substance dependency and families who simply struggle to cope.
- Some children experience harm from family members. This can be in the form of, neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and exposure to domestic violence.
- Some children do not have any surviving family members.
- Some children's birth family are imprisoned or in care themselves.
- Some children have been abandoned or rejected by their birth family.
- Some children have additional needs, and their families are unable to meet these.

Local Authorities must offer help and support to both children and their families, to enable children to live happily and safely with their own family. If, despite the help and support there are significant and ongoing concerns for the welfare of a child, the Local Authority must take steps to secure a child's safety and wellbeing by providing them with alternative arrangements such as foster care. Foster care can enable children to recover from the trauma they have experienced. Having a positive experience of family life within which they are loved, nurtured, accepted and kept safe enables them to thrive and reach their individual potential.

How long are children in foster care?

How long a child needs a foster home will depend on their individual needs and circumstances. They may need to be placed in foster care for only a few days; however, sometimes they are needed for months and sometimes for years. Children in foster care may be able to return home after a period or they may go on to be adopted. Other children remain in foster care long term until they reach adulthood.

What are the different types of Fostering?

- Emergency - when children need somewhere to stay at short notice where they will be kept safe while assessments and plans are made.
- Short term - provide children with a positive experience of family life in a safe, stable family home until the long-term plan is finalised.
- Long term - for children to stay until they reach adulthood and are able to live independently.
- Short stays - provided to children at weekends or during school holidays for short periods to support a full-time foster carer to have a well-earned short break. (Ideally with the same short stay foster carer)
- Bridging - is required for the period whilst a child or young person is successfully matched for adoption or with long term foster carers.
- Parent and Child – Parent/s and child/ren are placed together usually for a minimum period of 12 weeks to receive support in their parenting and for their capacity to parent effectively to be fully assessed.
- Private fostering arrangements are made by parents for their child to stay with someone other than a close relative. If this arrangement lasts for 28 days or more the Local Authority must be informed as it is their responsibility to assess that the arrangements meet the child or young person's needs.
- Remand fostering is for children who have been 'remanded' by the Court to the care of a Local Authority.



What Does a Foster Carer Do?

Foster carers play a central role in a team of professionals that includes social workers, therapists, teachers and health professionals. They work in partnership to ensure the children in their care get all the help and support they need. Foster carers are responsible for the day-to-day care of the children they look after. Parental responsibility is retained by birth parents and/or the Local Authority.

There are many tasks that foster carers agree to undertake including:

- Provide a safe and nurturing home for children
- Provide children with love and affection
- Giving children the opportunity to try different activities and hobbies
- Encourage and support children with school attendance and academic achievement
- Encourage and support children to attend health and therapy appointments
- Encourage children to positively engage in activities in the community
- Encourage, support, and facilitate contact with their birth family

Who can foster with us?

We are committed to recruiting individuals and couples who share our values and absolute commitment to caring for children and young people in accordance with our therapeutic ethos. This means being willing to learn, develop, embrace and adopt therapeutic approaches to care for children and young people.

It also means being committed to work in partnership with therapists and psychologists, which includes supporting a child or young person to attend regular therapy sessions, being part of the therapy sessions and/or adopting strategies and accepting advice provided by specialists.

We are looking for people who are passionate about caring for children, who are patient and kind, slow to anger and quick to forgive, openly committed, determined and ready for one of the most challenging and rewarding careers there is!

If this is you and you believe you have the key skills and personal qualities needed we would love to hear from you. You will need to have a spare bedroom suitable for a foster child and the time to devote to them.



Other Frequently Asked Questions:

Do I need to be a parent to foster?

No, you don't need to be a parent, but you do need experience of caring for children.

Do I have to have a partner to foster?

No, you can be single, married or have a partner.

Does it matter if I go out to work?

No, so long as you can evidence you have the time to devote to a child and can prioritise and meet their needs.

Can I claim benefits while I am fostering?

Yes, the fostering fee is not classed as income. More information about benefits can be found at www.fostertalk.org.

Do I have to own my own house?

No, you can be in a rented property so long as your tenancy is secure and your landlord is in agreement.

Are you looking for foster carers with particular cultural backgrounds or beliefs?

No, you can apply to foster whatever your cultural background and religious beliefs.

Does it matter if I am in a same sex relationship?

No, we welcome applicants from same sex couples as well as heterosexual couples.

What if I am part of the LGBTQIA+ community?

We welcome individuals and couples from all walks of life.

Is there an age restriction to fostering?

You can be considered from the age of 21 and can continue fostering past retirement age, as long as you are fit for fostering.

Do I need any formal qualifications?

No, you don't need any formal qualifications.

How to become a Foster Carer with us



As you will appreciate, the process for becoming a foster carer involves a thorough assessment of your suitability to foster and stringent checks.

These are vital to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children/young people within our service.

The following will provide you with a brief overview of the process we follow which is in accordance with fostering regulations set by the Government, regulated by Ofsted and guidance set by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF). This process usually takes 3 to 6 months (with a maximum of 8 months if there are any complications). Once you contact us the process begins!

Becoming a Foster Carer – Step by Step

1. Enquire

Contact us on **0800 024 6125** or **01843 598 647** or complete our web form to make an initial enquiry about fostering with us.

2. Speak to one of our team

We will contact you by telephone to have an initial telephone discussion.

3. Get a fostering information pack

An information pack and an application form are sent out to you.

4. Home visit

We will come and visit you at home and answer any questions you may have.

5. Deciding to be a foster carer

Once you've made the decision to become a foster carer, you can proceed to application stage.

6. Apply to foster

Complete and return the application form.

7. Sign consent form

We send you a consent form to sign and return. Stage 1 of the Assessment begins.

8. Statutory checks

Your statutory checks/references are processed.

9. Complete training

You are booked onto a "Skills to Foster" training course.

10. Second home visit

Your Assessing Social Worker contacts you and arranges another home visit.

11. Referee interviews

Your Assessing Social Worker visits and interviews your referees.

12. Checks are verified

Checks and references are verified and the decision to continue to Stage 2 of the Assessment.

13. Third Home visit

Your Assessing Social Worker completes visits with you and household members.

14. Completion of Form F

Your Form F is completed and given to you to check, add your comments and sign.

15. Panel interview

We invite you to panel and send you a panel guide.

16. Panel recommendation

Panel makes a recommendation and you will be informed.

17. Agency decision

The Agency Decision Maker makes a decision.

18. Approval

As soon as our decision has been made, we'll let you know you've been approved.

Initial Visit

During the initial telephone call, we assess if you meet our criteria and if so, we will arrange a suitable time to visit you at home. This is called an initial visit and it gives us an opportunity to explain more about fostering and more specifically about fostering with us. It also gives us a chance to get to know you and your family. We will also look around your home to make sure it meets the health and safety requirements for fostering; this will include checking the bedroom/s available for a foster child/young person.

Following our visit, you will have time to think about whether fostering with us is right for you and your family. Likewise, we will give full consideration to your enquiry. A brief written summary of our visit will be completed and will assist us in deciding if we can proceed with your application. We will contact you within 5 working days to inform you of the decision. If we cannot proceed with your application, we will provide the reasons for this in writing along with a copy of our Compliments & Complaints Leaflet.

If we can proceed you will be asked to complete your application form and return to us as soon as possible.

Application form

If, on receiving your application, there are reasons we cannot continue, we will write to you to explain what the reasons are. We will also send you our Compliments and Complaints Leaflet.

Consent and declaration form

Successful applicants will be informed in writing that we wish to proceed and will be asked to sign and return consent to medical/statutory check forms and a declaration form. These forms give us permission to carry out the required checks. Once we have received your consent forms Stage1 of your Assessment begins. This Assessment is called a Form F Assessment and will usually take 3 to 6 months to complete.

Checks and References

All potential foster carers will have to agree to the following checks and references.

- ✓ A Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS check) for every adult living in your household (previously known as a police check or CRB)
- ✓ A Local Authority Check
- ✓ If you have previously been approved as a child minder, foster carer or a prospective adopter, a reference will be sought from the Agency you were registered with and the records they hold about you will be checked
- ✓ Where you have previously lived abroad, a Protecting Children and Uniting Families across Borders Check will be required
- ✓ If your birth children are still at school, an Education Check will be requested
- ✓ A minimum of 2 Personal References are required
- ✓ An Employment Reference is required
- ✓ A reference from previous partner/s - where appropriate
- ✓ A Health Medical by your GP

Your information

Information received back from your checks and references will be strictly confidential and we have a clear policy on how long we will hold the information for. You can request to see any information we are holding. When we have received all the information a final decision will be made regarding your application progressing to Stage 2.

Skills to Foster Training Course



You (and your partner if applicable) will be invited to attend the 'Skills to Foster' Course. This will give you a good insight into the day- to-day realities of fostering, the implications of fostering on foster carers and their friends and families, and an understanding of the legal framework foster carers work within.

This course will help you to make an informed decision on whether fostering is right for you and your family at this stage of your lives. It also gives us a clearer picture of your suitability to become a foster carer. Feedback from the trainer of the course will be included in your assessment.

You will be given a copy of your completed assessment report to check through and add your comments. You will be invited to attend the fostering panel where your report will be presented. We will provide you with a copy of our panel guide which fully explains the panel process.

Form F Assessment

The main part of your assessment is completed by an experienced, qualified and registered social worker (known as the assessing social worker). This report is called the Form F and for this to be completed properly your assessing social worker will need to interview you, your partner, your children, other members of your household/support network and your referees. You will be seen individually and together with your family several times to enable the assessing social worker to gain a good insight into each of you individually and how you are as a family. They may also contact your adult birth children who no longer live in the family home. You will be encouraged to be actively involved in contributing towards the assessment and supported to provide your own written report/portfolio for the fostering panel to evidence your capabilities and to support your application.

The assessing social worker will assess your skills, competence and potential, relevant to your capacity to care effectively for a child or young person placed with you. They will record all appropriate factual information and address issues including your understanding of key areas including the following:

- Caring for children
- Contact between children and their birth family
- Helping children to make sense of their past
- Understanding and managing children's behaviour
- Awareness of forms of abuse
- Health and health promotion (including sexual health and relationships)
- Promotion of education
- Approaches to discipline

- Awareness of how to promote secure attachments
- Values, beliefs, cultures and religions
- Standards of living and lifestyles
- Awareness of equal opportunities and anti- discrimination

Already fostering

We are passionate about the service we provide and would love to hear from like-minded, experienced foster carers who share our core values and absolute commitment to caring for children and young people in accordance with our therapeutic ethos. If this is you and you would like to find out more about transferring to Family Fostering, please contact us – we would love to hear from you.

We are aware that making the decision to change is not something you do lightly and there will be various factors to consider. You are welcome to ring for a chat or pop in to see us and talk through any queries or concerns you may have.



Here are some of the frequently asked questions.

Do I have the right to change agencies?

Yes, absolutely! As a self-employed foster carer, you have the right to change agencies. This right is enshrined within the Fostering Network's, Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol England (2014) which can be found on their website. This Protocol is now considered the accepted process for managing the transfer of foster carers to another agency.

Will I lose any children I am fostering if I change agencies?

No. They have been placed into your care and should move with you. You can be assured that throughout the transfer process we will ensure any children you are currently fostering are not disrupted or distressed by the transfer.

What is the process for changing agencies?

When you contact us we will provide you with further details of our Service and give you the opportunity to come and meet the team. If you decide to transfer to us, the next step is for you to speak to your current agency about your plans to transfer and the social worker of any children you are fostering.

You will need to inform your agency and the social worker of children in your care of your intention to transfer. We will arrange a meeting with your current agency, the social worker/commissioner of each child in your care and yourself to ensure a smooth transition for you and the children in your care. If there are no children currently in your care you can resign giving 28 days' notice. Both a resignation and an intention to transfer must be made in writing.

Full details of this process can be found in Fostering Network's, Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol England.

Get in Touch

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Or pop in and see us!

