



Family Fostering
Recognising worth Unlocking potential



Become a fabulous

FOSTER PARENT

Information Pack For
Prospective Foster Parents

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Introduction to Family Fostering

Family Fostering was established in 2014 by Debi Atkin and Teresa Morgan, both professionally qualified, social workers, with over 50 collective years of experience in fostering as social workers, managers and registered manager. They both also have direct experience of being part of a fostering family. Their shared vision and passion for empowering foster parents 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 intentionally a small, family-orientated organisation, enabling us to develop strong relationships with our foster parents and the children they care for. Remaining a smaller agency allows us to provide responsive, individualised support and ensures that foster families receive high-quality professional guidance, emotional support and access to therapeutic resources. an intentionally small, family orientated fostering service with a therapeutic ethos. It provides specialist and personalised care and support for foster families, in full recognition of the complexities involved in fostering, and acknowledgement of the valuable role foster families 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 parents 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 parents, 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.

Nikki Goldfinch – Acting Registered Manager



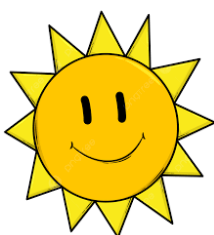
Nikki is an experienced social care professional with a strong background in fostering, safeguarding, regulatory compliance and service management. She has extensive experience working alongside foster carers, social workers and other professionals to ensure children receive safe, stable and nurturing care. Nikki brings a collaborative and supportive leadership style, with a strong focus on quality assurance, safeguarding and continuous improvement. She is passionate about building positive relationships with foster carers and staff while maintaining high standards of practice. Child-centred and values-driven, Nikki is committed to keeping children's voices at the heart of decision-making and supporting foster carers to provide nurturing, trauma-informed homes where children can thrive.

Chantelle Lacey – Practice Manager



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.

Sarah – Senior Practitioner



Sarah has been a qualified Social Worker since 2001 with her first 3 years working in a Children's and Families Team for the 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.

Katie Elton – Supervising Social Worker



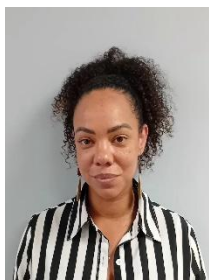
Katie has a therapeutic, relationship-based approach to supporting foster carers and children. She is passionate about helping children and young people who have experienced trauma, loss and disrupted attachments, using trauma-informed and attachment-based approaches to provide thoughtful and reflective support. Katie values building trusting relationships with foster carers and creating a safe space where they can explore challenges and develop their skills. She also brings experience supporting adults with complex needs and works collaboratively with professionals to ensure children's needs and voices remain at the heart of care. Katie is committed to creating a nurturing fostering environment where both children and carers can thrive.

Amanda Salt – Supervising Social Worker



Amanda is an experienced Social Worker who qualified in 1996 and has worked across a range of settings, including Alcohol Treatment, Community Mental Health, Youth Offending, schools and family support. She has extensive experience supporting families affected by domestic abuse, substance misuse, CSE, Autism and ADHD, as well as children impacted by trauma and adverse experiences. Amanda takes a therapeutic, trauma-informed and strengths-based approach to her work. She is committed to building trusting relationships with foster parents, children and families, supporting them with empathy, mutual respect and a focus on positive change.

Sarah Conway – Supervising Social Worker



Sarah is an experienced Social Worker with over five years of experience in fostering and early intervention. Sarah has a strong commitment to therapeutic and restorative approaches, helping carers understand and respond to trauma and complex behaviours. She is passionate about keeping the child's voice at the centre of her work and building positive, trusting relationships with foster carers, children and professionals. She brings a calm, supportive and reflective approach and is committed to helping carers provide safe, stable and nurturing homes.

Bonnie Dahl – Supervising Social Worker



Bonnie is a qualified Social Worker with a BA (Hons) in Social Work, with experience across both statutory Children and Families services and fostering. She began my career within a Local Authority Children and Families Team, where she developed valuable experience supporting children and families with a range of complex needs. She has since progressed into her current role as a Supervising Social Worker with Family Fostering, supporting foster carers to provide safe, stable, and nurturing homes for children and young people. Having experienced the care system myself as a child, Bonnie bring both professional knowledge and personal insight to her practice.

Krista Nichols – Finance Manager



Krista holds a BA Degree and a Diploma in Business Administration/Human Resources. She has been in post for over 10 years and has expertise in administration, human resources and finance. Krista is also qualified and highly experienced in TEFL and is experienced in conversing with speakers of other languages. She has a firm grasp on all aspects of fostering service and her warmth, empathy and humour help to create an office environment of respect, acceptance, understanding and care.

Izzy Clark-Sivyer – Office Manager



Izzy is the Office Manager at Family Fostering, with extensive experience in administration within the care sector. She is qualified in Team Leading and Management and brings an organised and practical approach to her role. She supports the team with the day-to-day running of the service, including onboarding, managing reports, documentation and compliance, while helping to ensure systems run smoothly. Izzy enjoys being part of a team that makes a positive difference to children and families and is always happy to support colleagues and help wherever she can.

Emeli McCormack – Panel Administrator



Emeli is an experienced administrator with direct experience working in a fostering environment. She oversees the organisation of panels and internal reviews, ensuring everything is well organised, accurate and completed within the required timescales. Emeli is also a key point of contact for prospective foster carers, supporting them throughout the process and helping to ensure they receive the information and guidance they need. Organised, focused and approachable, Emeli is able to manage competing demands while maintaining a friendly and supportive manner. She brings energy and humour to her role and is always happy to lend a hand and support the wider team.

Amy Cable – Administrator



Amy is a skilled administrator with Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in Business Administration, as well as a Level 2 qualification in Information, Advice or Guidance. She is committed to continuing her learning and development and takes pride in keeping systems organised, accurate and up to date, particularly in relation to compliance. Amy is friendly, approachable and naturally caring, and enjoys supporting colleagues and foster families. Her organised and child-focused approach makes her an important part of the team and supports the agency in maintaining high standards of compliance and practice.

Jess Bing – Administrator



Jess is an experienced Administrator having worked in administrative settings over a span of 15 years. Her experience includes School Administration however much of her career has been in the NHS within a mental health setting, including inpatient and community care for older and younger adults. She is an organised and compassionate individual, always looking to help and support others to the best of her ability. Her passion lies in working with others and making a positive impact whenever and wherever she can.

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 parents 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 parents to have key skills, personal qualities, high resilience, and strong support networks.

We value foster parents as fellow professionals and work alongside them, supporting them in every aspect of their fostering role. Our foster parents 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 Families

We believe the best way of supporting our foster families 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
- ✓ Coffee mornings for informal support with other foster parents
- ✓ Regular therapeutic workshops
- ✓ 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 parents 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 17 nights short breaks (full fee paid)
- ✓ Payments for up to 6 weeks when no child is placed

We regard every one of our foster parents 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 parent's length of service as well as their expertise by having a tiered fee structure and reward bonuses. We hope that our objective matches our foster parents' 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 from £505 - £960 per week.
- ✓ Monthly reward bonus for 1, 3, 5 and 7 years' service
- ✓ Short stay /support payment (a minimum of 17 nights)
- ✓ 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)
- ✓ Individual Membership including Training Passes with the Centre of Excellence in Child Trauma.

We strongly believe in working in partnership with our foster parents 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:** Provides a safe and supportive home for children who need somewhere to stay at very short notice while assessments are completed and plans for their future care are made.
- **Short-term:** Offers children a positive experience of family life in a safe, stable home while decisions are made about their longer-term future.
- **Long-term:** Provides a permanent family environment for children who are unable to return home, supporting them until they reach adulthood and are ready to live independently.
- **Short Stays (Respite):** Provides care for children during weekends, school holidays, or other short periods, giving their full-time foster carers a planned break. Wherever possible, children

stay with the same short-stay foster family to promote consistency and stability.

- **Bridging:** Provides temporary care for a child or young person while they are being matched with an adoptive family or long-term foster carers, helping to ensure a smooth transition.
- **Parent and Child:** Parent(s) and their child(ren) are placed together, usually for a minimum of 12 weeks, to receive support with parenting while an assessment is undertaken to determine the parent's capacity to meet their child's needs safely and effectively.
- **Private Fostering:** A private fostering arrangement is made by a child's parent or guardian for them to live with someone who is not a close relative. If the arrangement lasts for 28 days or more, the local authority must be notified, as it has a legal duty to assess the suitability of the arrangement and ensure the child's needs are being met.
- **Remand Fostering:** Provides care for children and young people who have been remanded by the court into the care of a local authority while they await the outcome of criminal proceedings or further decisions by the court.



What do Foster Parents do?

Foster parents 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 parents 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 parents 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 parents 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 Parent with us

As you will appreciate, the process for becoming a foster parent 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 Parent– Step by Step



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 parents 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 parent 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 parents and their friends and families, and an understanding of the legal framework foster parents 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 parent. 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 parents 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 parent, 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 parents 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

Whether you're just starting to think about fostering or you're ready to begin your journey, we'd love to hear from you.

Visit us at:

The Stable & The Forge
1 & 2 Spratling Court Office
Suites
Spratling Street
Manston
Ramsgate
CT12 5AN

Call us: 01843 598647

Teresa: 07815 532569

Debi: 07904 590421

Email:

admin@familyfostering.org

Or why not pop in for a chat?

You're always welcome, and we're happy to answer any questions over a cup of tea or coffee.

