



# Your Fostering Guide 2020



# Consider Fostering

Homefinding and Fostering is an Independent Fostering Agency in Kent. It was founded in 1996 by Terry Casey, who was an experienced foster carer for his local authority. It is still run by many of the original team.

A team who also includes people who grew up in a fostering family, who know first-hand how great the challenges, and rewards can be.

Terry often says that when he looks back over the last 40 years, fostering is the thing that stands out as something he is the proudest of.

Because of this, our focus is all about ensuring that our foster carers are supported. We care for our carers, so they in turn, can care for our children.

We know that when you start thinking about Fostering, it is a massive decision, and we will be with you for every step of that journey. When you apply to Foster, a member of our team will talk to you about what to expect from the process. We know that you will have lots of questions before you even start your application which is why we have created this handy guide.

We hope this guide helps to answer some of your questions, although, if you think of anymore, then just call us to ask. There is always someone available who will be happy to have a chat about Fostering.



## **Who can be a foster carer?**

Not everyone can be a foster carer, because we need special people for the task, but there are very few barriers to becoming a foster carer.

Whilst there are no strict age restrictions it is important that you are you are fit and healthy.

You can apply to be a foster carer if you are single or married, whether you have your own children or not, own or rent your home, and whatever your race, religion, sexuality or sexual identity.

### **Things that are important.**

You do need to have a spare bedroom available for fostering and we need you to have passion about making a difference to a child's life. You need to be patient, flexible and have a good sense of humour. You don't have to own your home, but it is important that you are in a stable environment. So, if you are thinking of moving, you might need to think carefully about when the right time to apply would be for you. You can also still claim some benefits when you are fostering (please seek advice from the benefits agency about this).

If you are in a relationship, we normally ask that you have been together at least two years; again this helps to ensure that there is a stable base for the children you may care for.

You need to think carefully about whether you have the space and time available to look after a child.

There is an ongoing commitment to training as well as attending any necessary meetings.

Generally our at least the main foster carer does not work, but there is a little flexibility around this so please ask for further details.

## **What types of children need foster care?**

Children are unable to live with their family for a variety of reasons.

Many children have had a difficult start in life and need a family that can offer consistency and support through times that may be a challenge to them. We know that some children have suffered poor or abusive parenting and as such need someone that can help them understand and work through their past experiences.

Foster children are as individual as the foster carers. They all have different needs and no two are the same. What works for you and your family might not work for someone else. This is why we make sure that we match the right child with the right foster carer.

Some foster carers also look after parents and their babies or small children, to help them learn the necessary skills to parent their own children.



## **How do I become a foster carer?**

If you are interested in fostering, please give us a call and we can talk you through each step. We will complete some basic information on the phone and send you an application pack. We will then arrange to do a home visit. Once you have returned your application pack, we will begin undertaking checks including a DBS check (police check), social services check, and we will take up references. You will then be assigned an experienced social worker to guide you through the process. This social worker completes a report, called a Form F assessment. This is all about you, your family, and your life experiences.

All applicants also have to undertake a medical. You don't have to be super fit – just healthy enough to look after children.

During this time, you will be invited to attend some training called Skills to Foster. This initial training lasts over three days, and allows you to begin to understand what foster carers do and how to work with fostered children and their families including the importance for children of having a secure base.

The Form F assessment and all the checks are presented to a panel of people who then, all being well, recommend that you are approved as a foster carer. Our Agency Decision Maker (or ADM) makes the final decision and you will be informed by telephoned and in writing.

The whole process usually takes between 4-6 months.

## **Can I express preference for the age group of children I wish to foster, or if I prefer girls or boys?**

Yes. We talk through every aspect of fostering and guide you to make a decision about what type or age of child would suit you the best. It might be that you feel more comfortable looking after younger children or sibling groups. Some people start their fostering career looking after teenagers and are surprised at how rewarding this is.

We also encourage carers who are considering looking after children alongside their parents. This is a specialised type of short time fostering, but if you are interested ask your assessing social worker about it.

## **What support will I receive?**

There is 24-hour support available every day of the year, as well as monthly visits and regular contact with the supervising social worker that has been assigned to your family. In certain circumstances there is also transport available to help young people maintain a school place, as well as assistance in maintaining links with birth families, if it is needed.

You will receive a generous allowance as well as an initial one-off fee when a child is placed with you. You also get a generous tax allowance over and above what most people receive.

Other support that is available is 14 days paid respite a year, a birthday and Christmas and summer holiday allowance as well as membership to foster talk, which gives you legal advice and insurance.

We also offer long service awards for our carers to recognise the incredible work that they do.

### **What training will I receive?**

Once you are approved, you will be offered a range of ongoing training, to help you do the job to your best of your abilities. All our carers say that they never stop learning.

### **Why Foster with us?**

In Kent alone there are a huge number of fostering agencies. It can be a bewildering choice.

What makes us different from most of those agencies is that we are a truly independent agency. We are not part of a bigger care group, or a multi-national organisation where profit comes before good care. We have retained our integrity and independence for nearly 25 years.

That means, when you call us, the phone will be answered by a voice you recognise. It means we get to know you and the children you care for. We value and celebrate difference and diversity. We share in celebrations and remain in touch with many of the children who came to us in a difficult time of their lives and we share in their successes.

For our London Carers we offer local training courses and support groups and again we will know your name when you call us.

### **How can I apply?**

If you would like to apply to become one of our amazing fostering families,

Fill out the application initial enquiry form below and send it to [duty@homefindingandfostering.co.uk](mailto:duty@homefindingandfostering.co.uk) and someone will get in touch with you to discuss fostering with you.

Or you can contact The Homefinding & Fostering Agency on 01622 765646 for an informal discussion. We will then arrange a time to come and see you and your family to discuss the application in more detail. Alternatively, you can email us through our website or through Facebook and Twitter.

[www.homefindingandfostering.co.uk](http://www.homefindingandfostering.co.uk)



## INITIAL ENQUIRY FORM FOSTERING

|  | First applicant | Second applicant |
|--|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>Name:</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>DOB</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>Address:</b>  |                 |                  |
| <b>Telephone number:</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>Mobile Number</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>Email address:</b>  |                 |                  |
| <b>Do you have a spare-room Available for fostering?</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>Do you drive/ have own car?</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>Do you smoke?</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>Do you have any pets?<br/>(We will not normally approve anyone with more than 3 dogs)</b>                                     |                 |                  |
| <b>Occupation?</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>Will one applicant be willing to give up work?</b>  |                 |                  |
| <b>What makes you want to foster?</b>  |                 |                  |
| <b>Are you a British Citizen or have indefinite leave to remain in this country?</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>Do you have any children?<br/>(If yes please complete details below)</b>  |                 |                  |
| <b>If a couple how long have you lived together?</b>   |                 |                  |
| <b>Do you rent or own your home? (if rented do you have the landlord's permission to foster?) How long have you lived there?</b> |                 |                  |



| Children's names                              | DOB | Birth child of both applicants? | Do they live at home? |
|---|-----|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
|   |     |                                 |                       |
|   |     |                                 |                       |
|   |     |                                 |                       |
| <b>Have you ever fostered before?</b>         |     |                                 |                       |
| <b>If yes for which agency?</b>               |     |                                 |                       |
| <b>Have you ever applied to foster before</b> |     |                                 |                       |
| <b>If yes for which agency?</b>               |     |                                 |                       |
| <b>Initial visit arranged?</b>                |     |                                 |                       |