



# The Foster Care Co-operative



An ethical and committed group of staff and foster carers who put the children first

# Introduction

The Foster Care Co-operative was started in 1999 and has grown steadily over the last few years. It strives to provide a range of excellent foster placements for children accommodated by Local Authorities and to provide a quality support service to our carers in the knowledge that support has a direct bearing on successful outcomes.

We are registered with the Commission for Social Care Inspection in both England and Wales who monitor and inspect our service.

We have regional offices in Cardiff, Bristol and Yorkshire and are looking to develop further offices throughout England.

The Foster Care Co-operative recruits mainly couples and individuals who are new to fostering and/or those who have had a break from fostering with another agency. Applicants will be asked to provide references to show their suitability to be foster carers. We particularly welcome applicants who are enthusiastic about being part of a co-operative that puts children first and not profit.

The Foster Care Co-operative places children and young people from Local Authorities throughout England and Wales and is steadily building up good quality relationships with a growing number of agencies who require placements.

We offer care to children across the age range, though most are between 5 – 15 years of age. We aim to provide families for children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Foster carers are needed for short term and long term care; they all receive the same high level of service and support.



# Aims and objectives

*“FCC does not discriminate on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, health, disability, race or colour.”*



It is the overall objective of The Foster Care Co-operative (FCC) to provide a child care service to Local Authorities which is of the highest quality, and with integrity. The FCC is a non-profit making agency designed to develop a reputation for service.

We have established an organisation that is influenced by the members, including all Foster Carers, Social Workers, and staff involved with the management of the Co-operative. The FCC is characterised by a democratic style of management, with a consultative process in place to ensure the views of carers are heard. There are clear controls on any surpluses we make and currently those surpluses are reinvested into the company.

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The FCC is committed to providing a service to Local Authorities which is excellent value for the fees charged. The FCC is committed to working with placing agencies and our carers within the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for England and Wales and all other associated legislation and regulations.

# What is Fostering?

For a variety of reasons, some children are unable to live with their birth families. There are many reasons why children cannot live at home and fostered children need special attention to help them understand what is and has been happening in their lives.

## Temporary or Short-Term Placements

Temporary placements are required whilst Social Workers make plans for the child which may mean a return home or alternatively an appropriate permanent home. Foster carers who are involved in short term placements care for children whose Care Plans are uncertain to begin with. They work with social workers to identify a permanent plan for them.

Short term placements are usually for less than two years duration. Sometimes children who have been in short term care with a family remain with the same family long term.

## Permanent or Long-Term Placements

Permanent placements offer children, who are unable to return to their own families, a secure and stable base throughout their remaining childhood and into adulthood. Ideally children should be placed with their brothers and sisters and therefore families that can offer homes to family groups are particularly sought.

A foster home may consist of a married or unmarried couple, a single person, or a same sex couple with or without their own children.

The home you live in could be your own or rented so long as it is secure. There needs to be at least one spare bedroom available.



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# Children referred to this agency



We receive referrals from Social Workers throughout the country who have been unable to place a child within their own resources. These children are likely to be deemed 'hard-to-place' and have behaviours that are problematic or they are part of a family group that needs to be kept together. We try to place the children as close as possible to their home area. For most children this is in their best interests. The children referred tend to be 5-15 years old, unless part of a sibling group when one or two may be younger.



## Who can meet their needs?

Every person interested in becoming a foster carer has to be assessed. There will be introductory training which includes attendance on a 'Skills to Foster' course. This is a requirement of the application.

We need to get to know you to make an assessment as to your suitability to foster and assess which child's needs you can meet.. The assessment includes taking up Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks, medical and personal references. You will be given the opportunity to meet with other carers. All this information is brought together in one form which is then presented to our Fostering Panel who will make a recommendation about approval.

For most applicants, the assessment, training and approval process is complete within 6 months.

We are seeking people who have a proven commitment to children and who will, through the quality of their childcare skills, promote the FCC as an agency that offers placements with carers of the highest calibre.

*(Data Protection Act, 1984. Please note that The Foster Care Co-operative may put information relating to your application onto a computer to assist with your application).*



# Foster Carer Support



**W**e acknowledge from research and from our wealth of experience that the quality, availability, and consistency of support has a direct bearing on successful placements. One of the reasons the FCC was founded was because we wanted to ensure an excellent support service and directly involve carers in developing a successful approach.

The needs of children in the care system seem to be ever more complex. This can make them both more challenging and more rewarding to live with. The FCC has a reputation for creating successful outcomes for the children who are placed with us. To ensure that this reputation is maintained and that we are meeting the requirements for a successful placement, we are regularly evaluating the support systems provided for our carers. These are some of the benefits that successful applicants can look forward to:-

- **Access to consistent specialist social work support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, throughout the year**
- **A social work visit every two weeks**
- **Formal social work supervision on a monthly basis**
- **Access to training and support groups**
- **Foundation training and further external training opportunities**
- **Peer support**
- **Respite care arrangements**
- **Regular, hassle free payment, direct to your bank, monthly in advance**

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# Quality and Standards

**W**e are registered as an independent fostering agency with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) which lays down the minimum standards for all such organisations.

We are committed to setting and adhering to recognised established standards of good practice. Consequently, all our foster carers become members of the Fostering Network and support the Foster Care Charter.

The Foster Care Co-operative makes full use of training materials provided by the Fostering Network and currently has training contracts with British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF).

Our social workers are all qualified and experienced in family placement and other aspects of social care. They are registered with the General Social Care Council which confirms their right to employment within the social care field and monitors standards. The Foster Care Co-operative promotes a strong training ethos which is applied to all staff of the Co-operative, including administrative staff.

We have both public and professional liability and employers' liability insurance cover. We uphold the principle of providing a "Best Value" service and welcome examination and comparison of our quality service and charges.



## Closing Comments

*We thank you again for your interest in our service. This brochure serves only as a brief introduction to our service and cannot hope to cover every aspect. If, having read this brochure, you are interested in hearing more, then please contact us. We will arrange to meet with you and explore your interest in joining us a step further, without obligation. We shall be delighted to hear from you.*





# THE FOSTER CARE CO-OPERATIVE

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