The Foster Care Cooperative

The A to Z of Fostering

Accepting  Caring  Birthday!

Educational  Dedication  Guidance

In Tune  Judgement  Love!

Multitasking  Non-Judgmental  Optimistic

Kindness  Patience  Questioning

Resilience  Time  Understanding

Valued  Humour  X-Factor!

Warmth  Your Health  Zoo Days!

The Foster Care Cooperative

Co-operatives UK

The Fostering Network

Fairer Fostering Partnership

Children Rights Project
Contents & The Team

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Visit our website at www.fostercarecooperative.co.uk to find out more about our team.
Who we are

The Foster Care Co-operative is a unique agency

The Foster Care Co-operative (FCC) is an ethically based UK wide organisation formed in 1999. FCC puts the needs of children first and works to provide a child care service of quality that is delivered with integrity. The agency has grown steadily since its formation with a regional office in Wales and a smaller office in the North West. The Head Office is based in Malvern, Worcestershire.

FCC is unique in that it is the only fostering agency in the UK operating under a co-operative structure.

We're not-for-profit

We do not make a profit from foster care. Instead, any surplus income we make is re-invested to provide more foster care support and more training for our carers. We have no business-related targets to meet, meaning that careful carer-to-child matching is our priority. As a result, our placement stability rate is over six times higher than the national average - meaning that our children are more likely to receive the consistent care they need during their time in the care system.

This is how foster care should be.

We're a co-operative

Our organisation is overseen by our board members who have no financial interest in the agency - unlike distant shareholders or investors. This means we can stay focused on our prime objective: to put children first above all else.

We are proud members of Co-operatives UK

Where our money goes...

52% of our income is paid directly to our carers.

24% provides the funding for support groups, training and training support costs, instructors, carer transport, catering etc.

24% agency costs - insurance, salaries for Supervising Social Workers and staff, office overheads, website, advertising etc.

The English Inspectorate, Ofsted commented:

“Children and young people achieve over and above what is expected of them academically and socially”

“The strengths and abilities of the staff group are key to the good progress and outcomes being achieved by children and young people”

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales does not permit partial statements from any inspection report to be used but current inspection reports can be accessed via our website.
Can I foster?

- **Do you have a spare bedroom?**
  A foster child must have their own room.

- **Are you aged between 21 and 65?**
  Fostering regulations state that all carers must be over the age of 21.
  In terms of upper age, 65 is a guide - a lot will depend on your health and fitness.

- **Are you fit and healthy?**
  A full medical will be required to assess your capacity or ability to care for children safely and effectively.

- **Have you got the time to fit fostering into your life?**
  You will need plenty of time and energy both during school holidays and term time.
  You may well need to pick children up from school and attend meetings about them.

- **Could you accept a detailed assessment of your family life and background?**
  In order to ensure that any foster child is placed with carers we can trust, such detailed assessments are essential.

- **Will all members of your family welcome the challenge of fostering?**
  A foster home is a placement with a family where everyone who is a member of that family must be committed and willing participants.

There are lots of myths about who can and cannot foster. You can be gay, straight, single, married, living together, with or without your own children, from any ethnic background and you can hold any religious belief. Our carers often say that the important thing is to be patient, flexible and to be able to enjoy caring for the child placed with you. Carers also need to be able to understand the child’s world and experiences – and have the strength of character to manage times when the behaviour of the child or young person is challenging (which isn’t always an easy task).

This is when a sense of humour and a non-judgemental attitude can make a positive difference. It is also important to have a good supportive network around you as even the most experienced and resilient carers have times when they need a break.

If you have a mature attitude and an understanding of the complex issues that can exist for any of the children and young people placed in your care, fostering may be for you.
The fostering journey

1. **THE ASSESSMENT STARTS**
   - with a visit from an FCC Social Worker

2. **REFERENCES**
   - We take up both personal and professional references

3. **CHECKS + TRAINING**
   - full medical, DBS and Local Authority check
   - and attend our Skills to Foster training

4. **ASSESSMENT**
   - An FCC Social Worker will make a full in-depth assessment

5. **FOSTERING PANEL**
   - The FCC Fostering Panel will consider and recommend

6. **YOU BECOME IF SUCCESSFUL A REGISTERED CARER**

7. **BEYOND**

To ensure we keep our children safe, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are carried out on all applicants.
The FCC appreciates that fostering is not an activity undertaken in isolation and that all members of your household are involved in the task. This is particularly the case for children of families who foster and the decision to enter into the world of foster care should be one that is taken as a family.

Your children are often able to have a positive impact on the child or young person joining your family. They can help them settle in as well as being a good role model. Carers also frequently comment that their own children gain a greater maturity and understanding of how adversity can affect others and this helps them form a more grounded and realistic view of the world.

The FCC holds regular events/fun days for birth children in order to ensure that their needs are not overlooked in what can sometimes feel like a pressured situation.

Each of our fostering families has their own Supervising Social Worker allocated and part of their role is to monitor and speak to birth children in order to ensure their continuing acceptance and co-operation and to identify any problems that may arise. Birth children will also be spoken to as part of the assessment process.

These are some comments from birth children:

“Anytime I have had a problem I can always talk to our Supervising Social Worker from FCC - and they always help me sort it out.”

“We make dens, play outside, play hide and seek. I like it when we are all friends.”
Different types of fostering

There are many reasons why some children and young people are unable to live with their birth families. Sometimes this is only for a short time, for others it can be for several years. For children and young people, a move away from their birth family is something that should be planned. Sadly this is often not the case and children are moved with very little warning which makes the experience more difficult for everyone. There are different types of placement:

**Short Term Placements**
These placements are required for short periods of time. This can mean only weeks or it can become a year or more! The Local Authority will need to make decisions about whether the child can be returned to the care of their birth family or whether a long term alternative home is needed.

**Long Term Placements**
These placements are concerned with children and young people who are unable to return to their birth families and who need a secure and stable home throughout their childhood and into adulthood. This often means caring for a young person until the age of 18 years and helping prepare and develop their skills for independent living. FCC supports ‘Staying Put’ (England) and ‘When I am ready’ (Wales) - schemes set up by the respective governments to promote young people remaining with their carers until they feel ready to move on.

**Sibling Groups**
It is usually desirable for brothers and sisters to be able to stay together when they cannot remain in their birth family. We are often asked to provide homes for sibling groups and so families who can provide care for more than one child, from the same family, are always needed.

**Respite Care/Short Breaks**
Applications are welcome from carers who may not have the ability or time, at this point in their lives, to provide full time care but may still be interested in helping parents and other carers by providing them with “a break”. This extra support often enables the child or young person to continue living with their birth family or full time foster carer.

**PACT (Parent And Child Together)**
These are placements of one or both parents and one or more of their own children where there are issues of parenting capability. The foster carer’s role is to help develop the parenting skills of the parent(s), whilst also providing care for the children. These are specialist placements and require additional training.

As an ethical agency that supports and promotes diversity, we also place unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. These are children under the age of 18 years who are seeking asylum, but are not living with their parents, relatives or guardians in the UK.
What FCC offer

We acknowledge from research and experience that the quality, availability and consistency of support offered to carers has a direct bearing on successful placements and good outcomes for children. Therefore as a carer with FCC you will be offered:

- **ACCESS**
  - Access to consistent social work support 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- **VISITS**
  - A visit from your Supervising Social Worker every two weeks. This may be increased if there are challenging issues involved in the care of a child or young person.

- **SUPERVISION**
  - Formal supervision from your Supervising Social Worker on a monthly basis.

- **TRAINING**
  - Access to our regular carer training and support groups.

- **RESPITE**
  - Arrangements to provide you with respite.

- **SKILLS**
  - An initial three day residential Skills to Foster training course.

- **PAYMENT**
  - Regular payment direct to your personal bank account when you undertake a placement.
Case studies

C’s mother required hospital treatment and, as there were no available family members to care for C, the Local Authority sought a time limited placement until her mum could resume care of her. Throughout the time of her mum being in hospital and the period of recovery, the carers were able to help transport C to see her Mum and reassure her that she was getting better. C eventually returned home and keeps in regular touch with her carers.

J was 16 when she became pregnant. Her birth family found this hard to deal with and requested that she leave the family home. The Local Authority identified a placement where J could stay until after the baby was born. J and the foster mother worked together closely. The carer was also J’s birthing partner when W was born.

The foster carer was able to help and observe J and her baby after the birth and provide evidence to the Local Authority that J was in spite of her young age, able to meet the needs of her baby. They eventually moved out to their own accommodation.

Alan, Joe, Mark and Lee have been fostered for the past 5 years after being removed from a situation where they were neglected. After the Local Authority established that they could not return to their birth family, their carers were asked to provide long term care of the siblings so that they could remain together.

All the children are now thriving and are achieving in all areas of their life. They are part of the family and have found security in knowing they will remain with their carers until they move to or achieve independence.
Questions and answers

Q: Do I have to let the child’s family into my house?
A: Most of the children we have in placement see their family away from the foster home. If they are safe and suitable people to visit their child in your home this can be reassuring to them and the child and you may be asked to agree to it.

Q: Do I get to choose which children come to live with me?
A: Yes, it is your home and you will always have the last word on who lives there. Your assessment will clarify the age and numbers of children for your approval and you will get all the available information to help you decide which children will be happy with you.

Q: How long will it be before a child is placed with me?
A: The training and assessment process involves a residential weekend, eight to ten visits to your home, references, police checks and a full report to the fostering panel. This is hard to achieve in less than four months and more typically takes six months. Because we believe matching the carer with the child is very important, time will be taken to place the right child with you.

Q: Will I be any good as a foster carer?
A: We have carers from all walks of life, styles of life, racial backgrounds and from 21 to 60+ years. The main thing is the time, space and experience to cope with children from difficult backgrounds.

Q: What are the children like?
A: The children are like any other children but they are likely to have experienced trauma and loss and that will mean that sometimes their behaviour can be challenging. Although we receive requests to help care for children of all ages, male and female, usually they are aged between eight and fifteen years. We also receive requests for sibling groups and these can often include younger children.

We understand that you may have more questions. Why not give us a call or, if you would prefer, have a look round our website at www.fostercarecooperative.co.uk.
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