



*Your Local Not-for-Profit Fostering Agency*



# WELCOME TO TEAM FOSTERING

Welcome to Team Fostering. We're delighted you're thinking about becoming a foster carer. We are a not-for-profit agency with a strong mission statement that underpins everything we do: *'Putting Children's Futures First'*.

At Team Fostering we are committed to achieving the best outcomes for children and young people and one of the ways we do this is by providing all of our foster carers with an exceptionally strong support, training, and benefits package.

Fostering is not without its challenges, but by taking on the role you're able to make a positive difference to a child's life who would otherwise not have the same opportunities to grow and develop in a safe and loving family home.

Our foster carers and staff work closely together to ensure that the children and young people in our care are encouraged to thrive.

We've put this booklet together to provide you with some more information about our agency, the role of a foster carer and how the journey works. We've even included a real-life testimonial from one of our current carers to give you a first-hand insight into the agency.

In the meantime feel free to get in touch with any questions you have.



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## WHY CHOOSE TEAM FOSTERING?

Team Fostering was established in 2001 by Peter Richardson and Walter Young. After years of working in the fostering sector, they shared the belief that independent fostering agencies should not make a profit from children and young people in care.

From around a kitchen table, Peter and Walter took a leap of faith and created Team Fostering. As a result of their principles, dedication and ethical values, staff and foster carers were quick to join the new agency, and indeed members of the original staff and foster carer team are still with Team Fostering to this day.

We're proud to have kept our not-for-profit, social enterprise status over the years, and we understand that continuing to work this way is one of the most important things to our foster carers.

### **What does it mean for our foster carers?**

Operating as a not-for-profit organisation means that we have no shareholders and that any surplus funds are reinvested directly back into the services we offer foster carers, children and young people. It gives us the freedom to make decisions based on their best interests.

As an agency with this approach, we choose to deliver an exceptionally high level of support, innovative foster carer training and a range of unique opportunities, which we would be unable to

provide if we operated 'for profit'. We reward our foster carers with generous fees and allowances, life assurance and an employee discount scheme.

For children and young people in our care, we use our resources to invest in a renowned programme of activities, consultations, and support, including an annual holiday and a range of events and get-togethers across the year.





## WHO CAN FOSTER?

At Team Fostering we take pride in recruiting foster carers from all walks of life. All of our carers have very different backgrounds and life experiences, and there is no perfect foster carer. We welcome all enquiries and do not discriminate based on age, race, gender, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation.

There are initial criteria in place that our foster carers need to meet to ensure that those becoming foster carers have the means to dedicate themselves to the role. However, we take the time to speak with all enquirers and consider all circumstances, eligibility concerns and potential solutions.

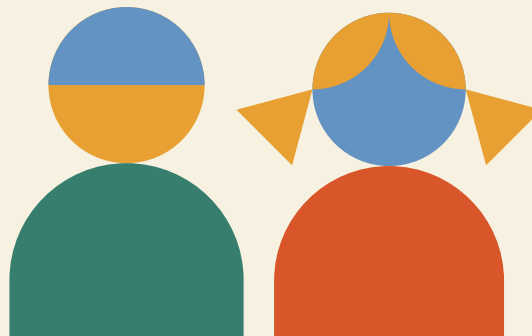
We do ask that our foster carers:

- Have a spare bedroom that could be used by a child or young person
- Are over 21
- Have access to regular, reliable transport to take children or young people to school, appointments, activities or visits to friends and family, etc.
- Are available to care for a child or young person 24/7, although we will consider applications from those who are self-employed or employed part time.
- If in a relationship, have been together for a minimum of 2 years.

If you are interested in becoming a foster carer

with Team Fostering, it is important to us that you are committed to making a positive difference in a child's life, and this is something we will speak with you about from early on in your journey. We will work with you to understand the challenges of foster care and help you to prepare for the journey ahead.

You'll need to be able to provide a child or young person with a nurturing family environment where they are valued, loved, and encouraged to achieve their full potential. To be successful you should enjoy the prospect of looking after children and young people and be able to meet their needs, at times adapting to different situations. It isn't essential for you to have been a parent, and you may well have some transferable skills from other experiences and roles that might have prepared you for some of the challenges of fostering.





## OUR APPROACH

Team Fostering is an ethical, not-for-profit fostering agency with an ethos that puts young people at the heart of everything we do.

Foster carers do something amazing when they welcome children into their lives, opening their homes and hearts to young people who need a family. Our choice not to make a profit from foster care reflects the fact that we are a truly child-centred agency, investing all possible resources into the best range of support and services for you.

### **What does it mean to be child-centred?**

When we talk about being a child-centred organisation, this means we place the care of the young people we support at the centre of everything we do as a fostering agency.

We ask that our staff and carers involve children in plans for their own care and the decisions made around it, while considering the impact these

choices may have on the child too. We encourage our young people to express their views about their care, and we will always advocate on their behalf where needed. Being a child-centred agency helps us to provide young people with opportunities to reach their potential and put their futures first.

### **What does it mean to be not-for-profit?**

Operating as a not-for-profit fostering agency means that, instead of having anyone who could make a profit from the care of children and the hard work of their foster carers, we have custodians who safeguard against anyone accessing the agency's assets for personal gain. We believe that the warmth and kindness of foster carers, in welcoming a child or young person into their home, is not something that should be taken for granted and we actively seek to ensure that they are supported in all the ways that they need to provide the best possible care to the young people we support.

This means that Team Fostering can remain sustainable into the future.

### **Our Values**

At Team Fostering we believe in a set of core values which we bring to our work. We believe that everyone at Team Fostering should adhere to our values of respect, transparency, reliability, honesty and of putting children at the centre of all we do.





## WILL THERE BE SUPPORT?

Being a foster carer is incredibly rewarding. It gives you the opportunity to make a real difference to a child's life.

Children and young people come into care when their own families are no longer able to provide safe and appropriate care, which can be for a number of reasons.

Local authorities will seek well-matched foster carers for children and young people who come into care, and this includes getting in touch with agencies such as Team Fostering to find a suitable family. We have an incredibly positive relationship with local authorities and have very successful matches between children and carers.

The role is not without its challenges and requires a great deal of patience and understanding. Children are likely to have experienced traumatic events before coming into care which means a high level of support and resilience is likely to be needed and setting foot into a new home is a huge change in itself.

At our agency we work with you as a team to ensure you are supported in the role and to provide you with the skills, guidance, and financial comfort to be able to look after children and young people.

This includes:

- A dedicated supervising social worker based locally, along with 24/7 support with a team of local social workers who know you.
- A bespoke Team Fostering Education and Support Service which is renowned across the sector.
- Peer mentoring schemes, monthly carer support groups and opportunities to join in with activities, away days and holidays as a family.
- Training opportunities, from the initial preparation training that foster carers require before approval, through to core training programmes delivered by internal and external providers who are experts in their field.
- A psychological support service, in collaboration with an expert psychologist, which aims to provide support and information to foster carers, children and young people to enable tailored care for children and the opportunity to recover from early traumatic experiences.
- Access for two funds; The Peter Richardson Fund and The Helen Middleton Fund, set up to provide further opportunities for children and young people.





## FEES AND BENEFITS

While we are a not-for-profit agency which puts children and young people before financial gain, we understand that in order for our foster carers to flourish they need to be financially secure and rewarded for providing care as a full-time role.

That's why we pay our foster carers competitive fees during placements, and support this with additional mileage allowances, life assurance, an employee discount scheme and a 'time in service' bonus at 5-year intervals.

The fees paid to foster carers are determined by the age and needs of the child that you are looking after. Some specialist types of fostering, such as 'Parent and Child' fostering, will be supported with higher fees that align with the additional challenges presented to the foster carer. Our recruitment team can discuss other types of specialist fostering with you.





# YOUR FOSTERING JOURNEY

We'll support you through all stages of your fostering journey, from your initial enquiry right through to your approval and development as a foster carer. You will always have one point of contact who will be easily contactable, and our friendly team are here to answer any questions you have.



## INITIAL ENQUIRY

After receiving an enquiry form or telephone call from you, we'll talk to you about what fostering entails and find out a little more about you.



## HOME VISIT

If both you and Team Fostering are happy to discuss this further, one of our social workers will come out to visit you at home and have a more in-depth discussion.



## INVITE TO APPLY

Our social worker will return to the office and consider your suitability to foster, and if we believe it's right, we will invite you to apply.



## ASSESSMENT

The assessment is split into two stages and takes up to 6 months. This includes us carrying out legally required checks and references, and obtaining more information from you.



## PANEL

At the end of your assessment you will be invited to a Panel meeting, where your assessment will be discussed and we might ask any final questions we have.



## APPROVAL

After the Panel Meeting, all information would be passed across to our Agency Decision Maker who will then confirm your approval as a foster carer with Team Fostering.

## SHARON'S STORY

Sharon and her partner Adrian are foster carers based in the North East who have been fostering for over a decade.

Through a career working in schools, from dinner duty to behavioural support work, Sharon knew that providing for young people was something she really wanted to do. And when Sharon and Adrian decided they wanted to do even more to support young people in need, they decided to become foster carers.

On starting out in fostering, they fostered with a local authority for a long time, and while they loved the experiences that being foster carers provided, their time with the local authority wasn't everything they wanted it to be. So, after reflecting on it for some time, they decided to transfer to an independent fostering agency. They did their research, looked into their options and found out about Team Fostering – and around a year ago they were approved as carers with the agency.

*“It’s so different to what we’re used to,” Sharon explains. “It’s been a breath of fresh air coming to Team Fostering. We’ve got nothing but positive feelings about everyone we’ve encountered – staff, other carers, the children – everyone has been really warm and welcoming and it’s been a genuinely positive experience.”*

*“We didn’t know anybody’s names where we were before, but now we’re getting to know everyone at*

*Team Fostering. You know that you’re valued and respected here.”*

And it’s not just Sharon and Adrian that the move has helped. The young people placed with the couple transferred across to Team Fostering with them when they moved. *“The benefits to the children have been amazing. They’ve never been happier; they just get on with enjoying themselves. They feel that they belong, whereas in the past they’ve been quite shy, and they’ve found their connection with the other children here.*

*“Everyone at Team has been encouraging, friendly and approachable with them, especially at the activities and events. The kids have done everything – surfing, Laserquest, Masterchef sessions – and it’s all provided by Team Fostering.”*





## FAQs

### **How does an independent fostering agency differ from a local authority?**

An independent agency is separate from, but works in partnership with, local authorities, who refer children and young people to us for matching with our foster carers.

Agencies like Team Fostering generally pay higher fees and offer more support, training and opportunities. In our case, this is heightened further by operating as a not-for-profit agency.

### **Can I foster even though my own children live at home?**

Yes, although some restrictions apply. We advise you to consider the impact of fostering on your own children and whether they are of an age/ understanding to manage this. We include your children in our assessment process, and also in the fun activities that we provide once you're approved.

### **Am I too old to foster?**

We don't have an upper age limit for our foster carers, instead looking at a larger picture of your suitability to foster. Your health and wellbeing, for example, is very important and a strong point of consideration for us during assessment.

### **Can I foster if I am single?**

Yes. We have many foster carers who are single. Team Fostering provides a great support package to all of our carers, and we would work with you to consider who in your life is able to offer you further emotional support should you need it.

### **Does Team Fostering consider same sex couples or single LGBTQ+ carers?**

Yes. We already work with LGBTQ+ foster carers and we welcome similar applications. We work hard to ensure that everyone feels welcome and part of the team. We are registered as an agency member to New Family Social, the UK's leading charity for promoting and supporting LGBTQ+ foster carers across the UK.

### **Can we say no to a referral if we don't believe the child or young person is a good match for our family?**

Yes. It is part of our ethical culture that we match children carefully to foster carers and their families, and we want you to feel confident that the match is right for you. We will speak to you in-depth when we believe we have a strong match and answer any questions that you have.

### **What happens if there are gaps between young people living with me? Do you pay a retainer?**

We don't pay retainers. We work hard to ensure that there are no significant gaps but, if this were to happen, foster carers are self-employed and would be expected to factor any potential placement gaps into their income management.

### **How much training do I need to do and does this apply to my partner who works?**

We require all foster carers to complete a set amount of training. Primary foster carers are likely to complete more training than secondary carers, however we encourage all foster carers to attend as many training courses as they can, with opportunities to take part in specialist training by external providers.



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