



Cuffe  Lacey
F O S T E R I N G



Care Connect Change

WELCOME

Hello and thank you!

Firstly, we would like to say a huge **thank you** for enquiring about becoming a foster carer with us. We know this a big decision, and we really hope we are able to help you take the next steps towards becoming a foster carer.

Fostering really is life changing, and not just for the children you will be helping. Foster carers will experience so much throughout their journey, becoming part of a new community who help children to grow, thrive and feel safe and secure.

We'll be there for you every step of the way. We know that fostering can be challenging at times, and our team of dedicated social workers and staff will be on hand as you develop and grow as a carer. We also offer a full program of training, as well as extra support for families as they need it.

You're needed now more than ever! In the UK there is currently a shortage of foster carers. If you feel that you may be able to offer a home to a child in need, then now is the time to apply.

We hope you find the answers you are looking for within this guide, if there's anything we haven't covered please let us know and we'll be happy to help.

We wish you the best of luck in your fostering journey, and hope to hear from you soon!

Michelle, Felicity and the whole team at Cuffe and Lacey



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Questions along the way?

Give us a call on 01253 542 678

We'll be happy to help!

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WHAT IS FOSTERING?

Foster carers provide homes for children when they are unable to live with their own families. This can be for any length of time, from over night to until they are 18 years old and beyond. Foster carers provide a loving, safe and stable home for children and young people, and work hard to ensure they provide the best possible care. Foster Carers will have a Supervising Social Worker, who will support them and offer assistance along the way.



Foster carers provide all day-to-day care for children and young people, supporting them in education, health and well being, as well as managing behaviours and keeping records. Foster carers promote working alongside the child's family and helping them to understand their life.

What makes a great Foster Carer?

There are lots of qualities that can make a great foster carer. The most important quality we always look for is a genuine desire to help children who really need it. We want all of the children we look after to be healthy, happy and fulfilled in their home lives, and for our foster carers to enjoy providing this.

Foster carers also need to be flexible, professional, and always have the best interests of the child at heart. Foster carers will work with a range of professionals and will need to be able to listen as well as advocate for the children in their care. We will always be there to help with this.

Other qualities that make a great carer: empathy, patience, humour, consistency, eager to learn.



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WHO CAN FOSTER



We are often asked about who can foster and what makes a suitable foster carer. We hope to attract a diverse range of carers so that we can make sure children feel comfortable and that all of their needs are met. We encourage people of all races, cultures, religions and sexuality to apply to become foster carers.

We accept applications from:

- Couples or individuals
- People who have or do not have children of their own
- People whose children live at home
- People who work and those who do not work or are retired
- People who receive benefits
- People with a physical disability
- People who rent or own their accommodation
- People who smoke [can only foster children ages 5+]
- People with criminal convictions for minor offences
- People who have had health problems in the past

We cannot accept applications from:

- People who do not have a spare bedroom
- People who have themselves, or a member of the household, have had a conviction which is detrimental to the welfare of children/vulnerable people, or is a specified offence under the Fostering Service Regulations 2011
- People with significant health challenges or issues



WHO WE ARE

We are an Independent Fostering Agency with lots of experience behind us. Our directors have over 80 years combined experience in fostering and our service manager has over 20 years. Our team are approachable, friendly and always ready to offer a helping hand. We want to use our skills to make a difference to children's lives.

What is an Independent Fostering Agency?

Independent Fostering Agency's, often referred to as IFAs, are private organisations, separate to the Local Authority. We work closely with Local Authorities to provide placements for children. All IFA's and Local Authority's are inspected and regulated by Ofsted.

IFA's are often owned by larger organisations. We are proud to be a standalone, director led agency. interested in providing the very best care and support for our carers and young people.

We have 3 core values that we try to work towards in everything that we do:

Care:

Providing the best possible homes for children who need them, and developing strong relationships with our foster carers so that they feel confident in their role.

Connect:

We want our children and foster carers to have their voices heard. We will always reach out to you and are there whenever you need us.

Change:

We want to positively effect the lives of the young people we help. We will always fight for the best outcomes for them and our carers.

You can read our full aims and objectives in our Statement of Purpose on our website.

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WHY CHOOSE US



As a foster carer for Cuffe and Lacey you will receive

- 24 hour on call support
- Monthly supervision with your dedicated Supervising Social Worker
- A chance to meet other foster carers regularly
- Extensive training and support programme throughout the year
- Assistance from a small, friendly team who want you to succeed
- Payments to support children, as well as recognition for your work

What makes Cuffe and Lacey different?

We are a warm, welcoming team dedicated to listening to our carers and children, and supporting you however we can. We are proud to be a strong, varied organisation, who are interested in finding ways to provide the very best care.

As well as our social workers, we have dedicated therapists and children's rights workers, who are able to offer unique and innovative assistance to our families if they need it. We understand the importance of identity and encouraging children to use their voice.



We also recognise the importance of birth families to children, and that this is sometimes shied away from. We want to work with our carers to create positive connections wherever possible.

We are very proud of our work involving Therapeutic Life Story Work. This helps children to understand who they are and to build strong, healthy connections with their past and present.

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TYPES OF FOSTERING

There are different types of fostering placements which you may consider. Your supervising social worker will discuss this with you and you can talk about what you think is best. You will also receive training and support to feel fully confident.

Emergency Fostering:

Emergency placements are short term, and will usually happen on the day we receive the referral, so things may need to be arranged quickly. They might be over night, or for a few days. They may turn in to a more long term placement once things have been decided. Emergency placements happen when unplanned situations arise.

Short Term Fostering:

A short term placement is likely for children who may be returning to their family, or moving to a more long term placement. The placement may be over night or last up to a few months.

Long Term Fostering:

A long term placement will be considered if a child is unlikely to return to their family, or is likely to remain with you until adulthood. Children will often have contact with their birth families, but your house will be viewed as their stable, secure home.

Sibling Groups:

Often children may come to us as a sibling group. Foster carers are usually approved for up to 3 children, however arrangements can be made to enable foster carers to keep larger sibling groups together.



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TYPES OF FOSTERING

Parent and Child:

In this instance, a parent and child will live within your home. You will offer support and guidance, to help parent and child develop their bond in a stable, nurturing environment.



Respite:

Respite care is a short term placement, used when the child will be returning to their permanent home. For example, to give families or foster carers a short break. This may be a one off or regular arrangement.

Specialist Placements:

We also offer specialist placements, which you may choose to accept with extra training or support. These will range from therapeutic placements, to children with complex needs, sexual behaviour problems, or children who are seeking asylum.

Age of Children

As an agency, we will receive referrals for all ages of children, however new born baby referrals will be rare [except for parent and child]. Your

supervising social worker will discuss with you the referrals you feel you will be interested in. We would always encourage our carers to consider all ages of placements, especially teenagers who are often undeservedly overlooked. You will be asked to consider referrals and it will always be your decision whether you wish to proceed.



ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The application process usually takes approximately 4 months and follows the process below.

Initial Visit/Application

One of our Supervising Social Workers will come out to visit you and talk with you about fostering. This will be an informal chat and chance for you to ask questions. They might have a look around your home to make sure you have a spare room, and see if there's any health and safety features you might need to think about. After this visit, we will let you know if we're able to begin your assessment, and ask for you to fill in our application form.

Begin Assessment

During your assessment you will have a dedicated Supervising Social Worker, who will work with you to complete a Form F Assessment. This will include visits to you,.

Your Form F will include:

- Exploration of your life experiences, including your childhood, past relationships and any significant events.
- Collecting references from your friends and employers
- A medical check from your GP
- Other checks with Local Authorities, schools or other agencies.
- An Enhanced DBS Check



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ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Skills to Foster

You will be invited to attend the Skills to Foster training. All foster carers complete this before they are approved to look after children. The course will be 3 days long. Here you will meet other carers and learn a lot about the fostering experience.

Attending Panel

Once you have completed training and your Form F is ready to be presented your Supervising Social Worker will decide a date for you to go to panel. You will sign your Form F before panel to say you are in agreement. The panel will be a group of professionals - such as teachers, social workers, care leavers - who will discuss your application with you and your Supervising Social Worker and make a recommendation as to whether you should be approved and for how many children.

Decision by Agency Decision Maker

The Agency Decision Marker holds the final say on approval of Foster Carers. They will look at all paperwork and panel recommendations and make the decision to approve.

Approval

As soon as you are approved, you are able to look after children. We will assign a Supervising Social Worker who will support you throughout, especially for your first placement! There will be a number of training programs you will attend in your first year as well as supervision and chances to meet other foster carers.



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PAYMENTS FOR CARERS

All foster carers are self employed and paid a weekly allowance when a child/children are placed with them. Payments are made to ensure all children in placements are well cared for, and as recognition for your skills as a carer.



Some things to consider:

- Each placement is different, and allowances will vary depending on your experience, the type of placement and the care that is needed.
- Placements range from £305-£500+ per week.
- Parent and child placements are often a higher rate due to the support required.
- If a child requires extra support then this may be taken onboard and additional finances provided.

What do payments cover?

Payments will cover everything a child need to be happy and healthy - clothing, food, washing, celebratory gifts, personalising their bedroom, internet and telephone access and travel.

Cuffe and Lacey expect at least the minimum weekly allowance to be spent on any child in placement. More information can be found here: www.gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering

A part of your pay is also for you as recognition of your skills as a carer.

Foster Care and Tax:

Foster carers receive generous tax relief on fostering earnings, meaning most carers don't pay any tax on their carer earnings. You can read more on the government website:

www.gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/tax-arrangements



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FAQS

Here are some commonly asked questions about fostering. We might have covered other questions within the guide, however, if you can't find the answer you're looking for please give us a call [01253 542 678] and we'll be happy to help!

Is there an age limit to foster care?

There is no upper age limit. You just need to be fit enough to complete fostering tasks and providing a safe home for children.

Can I work and foster?

Yes. There must be flexibility within your job or family to ensure you can successfully foster. Lots of carers work and foster.

Can I foster if I have a criminal record?

It depends on the conviction - if there are any convictions against children then no. It's important to be honest from the offset about any convictions, and a full DBS check will be completed as part of the assessment.

Will I have to undertake training?

Yes. Your supervising social worker will discuss training options with you.

Do I need qualifications to foster?

No. You must attend the Skills to Foster training but you do not need any formal qualifications to foster.

Can I foster if I have pets?

Yes. We will complete a risk assessment for any animals you have.



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FAQS

How will fostering affect my children?

Fostering is a big decision for the whole family, and you need to discuss and explain this with your own children. We provide a child friendly guide which you could go through together. As always, it's important to make time for activities with your children, and that they know you're there if they have any questions .

Will I need to have a medical?

Yes. All foster carers must receive a medical from their GP [we will cover the costs].

Will I have a say in who I foster?

Yes. We will discuss any placements we think you may be interested in, however you will make any decisions about who you foster.

Do I have to be a British citizen in order to become a foster carer?

You don't need to be a British citizen, but you do need to be a permanent resident in the UK.

What's the difference between fostering and adoption?

Fostering is a temporary or long term way for a child to live away from their family if they need to. They will often still have contact with their family, and you will not have parental responsibility. When a family adopt, the child becomes a legal part of the family forever.



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WHAT NEXT?

We hope you have found the answers you're looking for within this guide and feel ready to take the next step...

Your next steps are up to you - you can either complete our application form [sent with this guide] and return to our offices, or give us a call to arrange your initial visit.

We will give you a call after 1 week to see if you have any questions or need any assistance. We're happy to help however we can in your journey to becoming a foster carer.

It's a really exciting time to be joining us, and we'd love for you to join us as we **care** for children and young people, **connect** with each other and build a great relationships, and work together to **change** the futures of children for the better.

Foster carers are desperately needed in England and we'd love to have you onboard. If you feel you could make a difference to a child's life, please give us a call today. We hope to hear from you soon!

*Michelle, Felicity and
the whole team at
Cuffe and Lacey*



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Contact us

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