



Oak Fostering

Long term therapeutic foster placements



becoming a Foster Carer

Your guide to fostering with Oak



Why children need foster care?

At Oak Fostering we care for the children for whom a return home has not been possible, those who are expected to remain in foster care until they are adults.

The children placed with us have a slightly higher level of need, which means that mainstream foster placements may have not been suitable for them. They will have had multiple traumatic events and experiences and this will have affected their development and behaviours.

They need care to provide stability, while they deal with their experiences, catch up with their basic development and learn to trust adults again. This can be really tough for them and those around them, which is why they need the type of specialist care like that offered by Oak Fostering.

'The reasons children come into care vary widely, including a parent's short-term illness or another temporary problem within the family. Some children may have witnessed domestic violence or a parent's depression or drug or alcohol misuse. Others may have been abused or neglected. Each child's circumstances and needs are unique.'

'When the decision is made to take a child into care, the local authority (in England, Scotland and Wales) or health and social care trust (in Northern Ireland) becomes responsible for his or her welfare. Social workers work with families to make the home a safe place for a child, with the aim that children and parents can be reunited if possible'
(The Fostering Network)

Who can be a foster carer?

Almost anyone!

Many people don't apply as they assume they will not be suitable, but are often surprised by who can foster. People of all different ages, cultures, ethnicities, religions, sexualities, and marital status' can foster.

We are always looking for foster carers who need to be available full-time, however if you have a full-time job this doesn't mean you can't be a foster carer. We also recruit respite carers who can offer valuable breaks to our main foster carers. The application and recruitment process is exactly the same regardless of which type of fostering you are applying to do.

The key things we require of you:

- to have a spare room which will be used solely by the foster child
- to confirm that one carer is available full time to be a foster carer (unless applying as a respite carer only)
- to be willing to complete an enhanced DBS disclosure to confirm you are safe to work with children
- to be willing to undergo a health assessment to confirm you are fit and well enough to carry out the role
- to be willing to engage in the fostering assessment process
- to be willing to commit to a child in the long term
- to understand and appreciate it can be a very challenging role, but also a very rewarding one

Because of the nature of the children we care for it is also very helpful if you have existing experience of working with children in any setting, particularly those which have brought you into contact with children who have experienced trauma and those who display challenging behaviour.

If you are unsure whether you will be suitable for the role, just ask us by requesting a call back and we can talk you through the whole process.



Why choose us?

Oak Fostering was formed with the principle aim that all children deserve a to live in a family where they experience permanence and a sense of belonging. They need to be able to trust that this will remain their home into adulthood, regardless of anything they might do.

Oak Fostering

The directors understand the challenges of offering this unconditional love and care to a traumatised child and therefore chose to create Oak Fostering using a different approach to many other fostering agencies. While we value the importance of a family experience, we recognise that the children within our service may not always fit naturally into a family setting. Therefore we need to approach recruitment, matching and placement support differently.

We recruit and train our specialist foster carers specifically to care for children who have experienced trauma and who are not able to remain living with their birth families. As a result of the trauma they have suffered, many of the children we care for have a range of needs and can display some challenging behaviours. Our carers are fully prepared for the challenges these children will present and are offered extensive support packages to help them through the difficulties they may face.

Unlike other fostering agencies, the children we match and place

with our carers are children we have cared for and know inside and out. We have laughed and cried with them, we have dealt with their challenges; we have built memories with them and supported them on their journey. This enables us to match placements in a much more informed way. Our carers will be given extensive histories, knowledge of triggers and strategies as well as first-hand examples of the child's behaviours, personalities and interests.

We believe the support we offer our carers also sets us apart from other agencies. Because we know the children we place, we can offer support from people who already have relationships with the children, who know how to engage them and can work alongside you to achieve the best outcomes. Oak Fostering also feels passionately about not offering a 'one-size fits all' approach to support: we tailor our support packages to work for the individual foster family. We recognise that this is a challenging role and we take our responsibility to support you seriously.

“Children don't just need to be loved; they need to know that nothing they do will change the fact that they are loved. They require reassurance that their lovability isn't in question, which is another way of talking about self-esteem”

Alfie Kohn author of *Unconditional Parenting*

Support

The support we offer is tailor-made in a way that works for the individual child and family and can include on-call support, babysitting, day care, consistent planned respite and many other forms of support. Many agencies offer on-call telephone support but we feel carers need more than this; we seek to give our carers a different experience, the experience of not being alone.

We believe on-call support should be someone who will come out to them if needed, no matter the time or day, and support them and their foster child through the struggle they are facing; this is what Oak Fostering offers. We also aim to create networks of carers who can informally support each other, who can meet socially and share experiences and knowledge, further creating the feeling of being supported.

We believe that if we support our carers in the right way, they in turn can support our children to thrive. We recruit and train our carers to

provide an environment which promotes thinking, listening, reflection, understanding and development. We have a strong focus on developing our carers' skills and abilities in understanding and responding to trauma. We believe that providing carers with the space to think about their practice and about the children enables them to be more aware of how they manage situations and of why the children respond as they do.

This helps them to continually develop as practitioners and to assist the children effectively to make positive changes. We believe that work to help children deal with trauma is not only carried out by qualified therapists, it can also be through therapeutic relationships, which do not solely exist within a therapy room. For this reason our carers, whilst not being qualified therapists, are trained to support children therapeutically.

Application Process

The application process is thorough in order to ensure that children are offered the best standard of care and that carers are fully prepared for the role they are undertaking. Below is a summary of the recruitment process but full details can be found in our Foster Carer Recruitment policy.

Potential carers can make an initial enquiry to Oak Fostering via phone, email or using the Oak Fostering website. This enquiry will be responded to promptly by a supervising social worker and details of the discussion will be recorded on an Initial Enquiry Form. Following this initial enquiry if it is considered that the basic requirements are met, an initial visit will be arranged.

Initial visit

An initial visit will be carried out by a supervising social worker and will be an opportunity to discuss in more detail the role of Oak Fostering carers, the expectations and the detail of the assessment process. The supervising social worker will also explore the motivations to foster, the skills and experience of the applicants and confirm their wish to proceed with the process.

Following the initial visit, the social worker will make an assessment as to whether the application is suitable to proceed. Details of the visit and decision will be recorded on the Initial Visit form and the applicant will be given a copy confirming the outcome and reasons for this.

Application to foster

Following a successful initial visit, the prospective foster carers will be provided with an application form. They must complete this application fully and submit it to Oak Fostering.

Once the fully completed application is received, an assessing supervising social worker will be allocated to begin the full assessment.

Skills-to-foster training

As part of the preparation to foster, Oak Fostering will provide training that will help prospective carers learn more about the fostering role, explore some of the potential challenges and identify any areas of concern they may have. This course will contribute to the assessment process and foster carers' engagement and participation will be assessed.

Assessment

Oak Fostering uses the BAAF Form F as a framework for the assessments carried out on prospective carers. All assessments of prospective carers are conducted in two parts that may run concurrently.



Full assessment report

If applicants progress successfully through the assessment process, details of assessment stage 1 and 2 will be included in a written report to the fostering panel along with recommendations regarding any terms of approval. This report will include the assessing social worker's analysis of the information shared during the assessment process.

Presentation

The applicant will be notified that the full assessment report is to be sent to the panel, provided with a copy of the report and given 10 working days from the date of the notification to send their observations to Oak Fostering. The full assessment report will then be presented to the fostering panel for consideration along with any observations submitted by the applicant and any other relevant information.

Further details of how the panel is conducted and the process of panel meetings are contained in our Panel policy.

Agency decision maker

The Agency Decision Maker will make a considered decision about the application, taking into account the recommendation made by panel, the full assessment of the applicants and any supporting evidence. This decision will be made within seven working days of receipt of the panel's recommendation and the final panel minutes. The Agency Decision Maker's decision will be communicated verbally to the applicants within two working days and written confirmation will be sent to them within five working days.



Oak Fostering

Long term therapeutic foster placements

Please contact us on:
t: 07543 810 380 e: info@oakfostering.co.uk

oakfostering.co.uk