



Fostering with Park Foster Care



Text the word
'FOSTER'
to **60777**



www.parkfostercare.com
0800 169 4552

Hello & Welcome to Park Foster Care

Thank you for your interest in becoming a foster carer with Park Foster Care. We hope you find our fostering guide useful and that it informs and answers any questions you might have. Our friendly and experienced team are here to provide guidance, support and help throughout your journey so you won't be alone; we'll be with you every step of the way.

At Park Foster Care we value our foster carers as part of the professional team and through understanding the importance of a child's history, seeing their uniqueness and working together we can make a difference and help shape a child's future and unlock their true potential.

About Us

Park Foster Care is a well-established independent fostering agency started in 2004. Over the years we have approved, trained and supported foster carers across the Staffordshire, Shropshire, Cheshire and East Midlands areas of England. In June 2023 we were rated 'GOOD' by Ofsted who commented "This well-established team provides stability to children and their foster carers and makes a positive difference to children's lives".

With an experienced and established team, we are passionate about creating a small, family agency where the children are at the centre of all that we do. Foster carers are the key to keeping foster children safe

and helping them to realise their potential and when our carers spoke to Ofsted they commented on the "great support" they received from their supervising social workers who are patched based, so never far away from where they are needed.

We work in a therapeutic way, recognizing that many foster children need parenting in a different way to help them overcome their past traumas. Our annual training calendar provides our foster carers with exceptional learning opportunities which, in turn, provides positive foster family experiences to children and young people in their care.

Are you interested in exploring different ways of parenting?

Do you have a big heart for children who have been through trauma?

Could you make a difference for them?

If the answer is YES
call us today on
0800 169 4552



The Park Parenting Approach (PPA) & Trauma Informed Practice (TIP)



Our aim is to provide the very best foster homes to children and young people. Our foster carers are fully trained to offer the kind of understanding care and therapeutic parenting that children and young people really need to enhance their lives and help them achieve their full potential.

One of the key ways we do this is through our unique training program: Park's Parenting Approach and Trauma Informed Practice. This runs through everything we do from recruitment and our skills to foster course, carer supervision, to additional training, parenting forums to support groups.

The best way to help children heal from trauma is through helping them develop positive relationships with carers who understand the impact of early life trauma.



Your Introduction to Fostering

What is fostering?

Fostering is a way of providing a stable family life for children and young people in care, who are unable to live with their parents at a point in time. This allows children the chance to thrive in a safe, secure, loving and caring home environment with foster carer/s.

Foster carers provide a stable environment for children and young people. This could be for a few nights/weeks, months or years and sometimes until they reach adulthood.

Many fostered children and young people return to their own families after a temporary stay in foster care however for some children this is not possible and they need a new home with a foster family who can care for them on a longer term basis.

Who can foster?

Park welcome applications from people who can bring different skills, knowledge and life experiences to fostering.

A variety of foster carers are needed to support the diversity in our foster children population and we support fostering applications from couples, single men & women, LGBTQ community and all ethnic & religious backgrounds.

The main criteria to become a foster carer:

- you must be over 21, there is no upper age limit
- you will have at least one spare bedroom for fostering
- you will need to be a full time resident in the UK or have leave to remain status.



Types of Fostering

There are all sorts of reasons why children come into care and no two circumstances are the same and that's why we need carers who can offer a variety of care. Here are just some of the types of fostering you could consider.

Short Term

Short term fostering is when you care for a child or young person for a short period of time whilst decisions are being made for their future. This may be for a few nights, months or sometimes longer. For some children it may be a plan to reunite them with their own family or to find them a foster/ adoptive family who can provide care until they reach independence.

Long Term

Some children need a fostering family for a longer period of time and this can be until they reach independence. There are a number of reasons why children may need a longer term foster family, it may be that they are unable to return to their own family or that adoption is not for them.

Respite

Some children benefit from short, planned breaks away from their main foster carer/s, this may be for a few nights or an occasional weekend but generally no longer than one week. This break provides opportunity for children to gain new experiences with other foster families.

Parent and Child

A parent & child foster carer offers a specialist type of placement whereby they provide guidance and support to a parent and their own child whilst they stay in your home. Often it's the case that a parent is struggling to look after their child and they need a mentor to help them be a better, nurturing parent.

Emergency Care

Children & young people sometimes need a foster home at short notice to keep them safe and this could be at any time of day or night. Emergency fostering will mean you may not have much notice and there may be no way of predicting how long they will be placed with you.



Becoming A Foster Family Training



Make an enquiry

Enquiring about becoming a foster carer couldn't be easier. Simply contact us on **0800 169 4552** or email **info@parkfostercare.com** to register your interest. One of our friendly team will be in touch within 24hrs and arrange a convenient time for an informal chat.

Whether you're new to fostering or an existing carer our team is looking forward to hearing from you, answering some of your questions, providing you with information and supporting you every step of the way.

Arrange a Home Visit

Our home or virtual visit provides a great opportunity for us to get to know each other better and will really inform you about fostering. There's lots to talk about and we're keen to learn more about your interest in becoming a foster carer.

We'll be able to explain the rewards and practicalities of fostering and to talk through the 'becoming a foster carer' process too. The visit is really informative and on average a home visit can take anything from 2-3hrs but it's whatever you need it to be.

Skills to foster

Following a positive home visit we will invite you to attend our free 'Becoming a foster Family' mandatory training course, which has been designed to provide you with a range of learning modules. Providing you with a realistic insight about what it means to be a foster carer, what children in care need and how Park can support you in providing the best outcomes for children and young people. It's also a great opportunity to meet the Park team, talk to existing foster carers and to meet others, like you, who are starting their fostering journey with Park.

Transfer to Park

If you are an approved foster carer with someone else then we can offer guidance & support to help you through the 'transfer protocol' process to Park. We have successfully and positively completed the transfer of many foster carers from both independent agencies and local authorities. We know what your concerns might be and our experienced staff are on hand to talk to you about how we will support you, you family and any children placed with you, through the process.

Our Story

“ We have been foster carers for almost 12 years. We started our career with Park Foster care and after 7 years we transferred to our local authority whom we were with for 5 years.

We made the decision to return to Park Foster care this year after a succession of different supervising social workers meaning inconsistencies in our support. We have a long term sibling group of three children in placement and for us and the children we need the best possible support.

We felt that Park Foster care, whom we were with for 7 years and supported us with the same Supervising Social Worker for all of that time, would meet our long term needs and that of our children in placement far better than the LA. Their level of support is much

higher, the likelihood of continuity and consistency of support is far higher and they provide excellent therapeutic support, which we may need to access in the future.

They have a therapeutic parenting approach which from experience we know will support placement stability for the children and provide access to additional services. This will be positive for us as carers to support the attachment work needed by the children as they develop.

So that was the professional aspect, but on a more personal level, being back with Park feels like coming home. We feel safe, looked after and secure in the knowledge that pretty much anything that we face in the future, Park will be there to support us and 'our' children.

Our future is bright.



“ From the time of applying to approval our experience of Park was that they were efficient, refreshingly straight forward and supportive through the process. ”

Helen, Foster Carer



From Application to Approval

Start the assessment process

Following completion of an application form, we will carry out extensive checks including work, personal and local authority references. A medical assessment and Disclosure Barring Checks (criminal reference check) are also undertaken. We will help guide you through this process with some additional support from our dedicated administration team.

In preparation for the next stage we'll be asking you to contribute to the assessment by completing information such as family trees, Ecomap (support networks map) and 'My Life Story'. We'll provide you with templates and guidance notes making them really simple to complete but if you need any help we're here to assist you.

Finally, we will allocate a Form F Assessor to carry out an assessment of your potential ability to care for someone else's child. This assessment will involve about 10 visits (depending on your family circumstances) and will result in a written report called a Form F Assessment.

Prepare to care

We really want you to feel supported through the process of becoming a foster carer so this additional meeting is a great place to catch up again with your skills to foster group, learn about our training and local support groups and to ask for any advice or help with the assessment process.

Fostering panel

Now that your training and assessment is complete you'll be invited to attend our fostering panel, where the report will be presented for their consideration and recommendations. The panel members are made up of professionals from various sectors all with extensive fostering experience. Your assessing social worker will be there by your side to support you on the day.

Once our Agency Decision Maker has signed off your approval, usually within 10 working days, we can then assign an assessing social worker to support you in your role as foster carer.

Approved to Foster

Following approval, you will be invited to an induction session where you will meet the various members of the staff team who will be supporting you in your fostering role such as Learning & Development, Placement Officers and administration team. You will also be allocated a Supervising Social Worker (SSW) who will support you in your role who will meet with you for supervision on a regular basis.

You will be allocated training dates and receive regular training session updates from our learning and development team. Training is offered in different venues within all the areas that we cover within Staffordshire, North West & East Midlands. Having multiple training venues ensures you never need miss out on crucial training when you're fostering.

One of our placement coordinators will work with you and your supervising social worker to create your carer profile, this is one of our matching tools and your profile is shared with local authority placement teams. We also have a child friendly version of the carer profile so that we can share this with any children being placed with you. Our placement coordinator will contact you when any children or young people are referred to us who we think would make a good fit with you and your family.

With our 24/7, 365 days a year 'out of hours' service we are ALWAYS at the end of the phone to answer your questions and offer support.



Learning and Development

At Park Foster Care, we are committed to supporting and training our foster carers to be the best they can be. It's crucial that they are able to offer stable and nurturing placements to children and young people so that they can have positive outcomes. That's why we offer highly specialized training and 24/7 support from skilled and experienced social workers and trainers.

Training

Foster carers are the key to keeping looked after children safe and helping them to realise their potential. At Park Foster Care we believe relevant and effective training is essential to provide a thorough understanding of child development and the legislative and regulatory frameworks within the fostering role. Training takes place at a number of different venues which supports our foster carer's locality.



At Park Foster Care we provide mandatory core training sessions:

- **Safeguarding and safer caring**
- **Equality and Diversity**
- **First Aid**
- **Report writing**
- **Park Parenting Approach (PPA)**

In addition to the above you will be invited to attend specialist and advanced courses to reflect the needs of the foster carer groups, societal and emerging themes in children's services.

Areas We Cover

Park Foster Care works in partnership with lots of local authorities across the West Midlands, the North West and East Midlands areas, as well as further afield to.

We pride ourselves in the quality of relationships developed with our partner agencies and receive referrals through authorities who require local foster placements with our carers. We have experienced supervising social workers, who are patched based, covering Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire, Shropshire and their surrounding areas, with local training venues to support all our carers.



What OFSTED says



Park Foster care is rated 'Good' by Ofsted! The report highlights that "children are making good progress in all aspects of their lives" and that "careful matching, together with the agency's ongoing support, contributes to a high percentage of stability and as a result, children thrive". Our foster carers describe receiving "great support" from their supervising social workers with Ofsted also noting that "Foster carers advocate for the children, and the supervising social workers support them to challenge placing authorities when needed. This results in children receiving individualised care that leads to the best outcomes for them".

Visit the Ofsted website and enter the URN: SC055725 to read our full inspection report.

Park is very proud to be rated 'Good', it's a real testament to all the hard work, dedication, and commitment of our entire Park family.

“ Staff turnover is exceptionally low. This is a strength of the agency and results in a high level of consistency for foster carers and children. ”

Support and Guidance

An allocated supervising social worker is assigned to each of our foster carers, providing support for them and their family and helping them establish positive placements for children and young people. There's also a 24 hour support service available to our foster carers.



Out of Hours

At Park Foster Care we believe in ensuring you have access to emergency social work support 24/7 365 days per year. Although we are not quite the fourth emergency service! We are available to support you with urgent issues, talk through any concerns you may have as well as being there for you to report any significant events to, outside of normal working hours.

Supervision

An allocated supervising social worker is assigned to each of our foster carers, providing monthly support visits for them and their family and helping them establish positive homes for children and young people.

Your supervising social worker can be updated on everything that is happening for the children in placement.

Fostering Support Worker

Our experienced Fostering Support Worker (FSW) provides support to our foster families and the children they care for.

Providing strategies and Park Parenting Approach (PPA) therapeutic guidance they complete task centered pieces of work and intervention work directed by your Supervising Social Worker and other professionals.



Allowances, Rewards and Benefits

When you choose to foster Park Foster Care you'll be entitled to some great benefits:

- Quarterly carer newsletter
- Monthly support groups
- Comprehensive range of free training
- 24/7 support for advice & guidance
- Summer activities and awards events
- Paid membership to Foster Talk
- Family events held throughout the year to bring us all together such as: summer picnic, book clubs, workshops, Christmas party and lots more.

Financial Support

Becoming a foster carer is a potentially life-changing decision and we believe foster carers should be financially stable in order to support the children they care for.

Our foster carers are paid for the work they do in transforming children's lives, they receive a competitive fostering allowance and professional weekly fee which is based on the child's age and care required. This financial package of support (fostering allowance) is paid to our foster carers on a fortnightly basis.





Frequently Asked Questions

Park Foster Care understands that you may have a number of questions relating to becoming a Park Foster Carer, here are a few frequently asked questions with answers which can help you.

I'm a single person, can I foster?

Yes you can, we have a really good mix of single men & women, as well as couples, who are fantastic foster parents. If you can offer a stable and child centred home your relationship status and gender is not considered.

Do I need a spare bedroom?

Yes, children living with you need their own space. If you have more than one bedroom available for fostering you might want to consider caring for sibling groups.

Are there any age limits?

Many people think they're too old or too young to foster a child, but you can apply to be a foster carer from the age of 21 - and there's no upper limit.

Do I have to be a British citizen?

You'll need to be a full time resident of the UK in order to start a fostering application.

Can I work & be a foster carer?

You really do need to have time in your life to be a foster carer. You will be expected to be available to care for a child or young person (including weekends & school holidays), attend meetings, specialised training, support groups, and to promote and support contact between a child and their family.

Can I foster if I smoke?

We do have foster carers who smoke/ vape and they care for children from the ages of 5yrs of age. It is essential that our foster carers homes are smoke/ vape free and that no one smokes in the home.

I am renting my home, can I foster?

This isn't an obstacle to fostering, but you will need to have a chat with your landlord and gain their permission to use your home for fostering.

Please call us on
0800 169 4552
to speak with one of our dedicated members of staff who will be more than happy to answer your questions directly and in more depth.



Inspired to foster? Call us today

Thank you for your interest in fostering. We hope this information has inspired you to become a future foster carer. Together we could make an amazing difference to a child's life.

Tel:
0800 169 4552 or 01782 569 500

Email:
info@parkfostercare.com

Text:
'Foster' to 60777

Our office opening times:
Mon - Fri: 9am - 5pm



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