

New Foster Carer Brochure



*Your local not-for-profit
fostering agency*

Hello and welcome to Team Fostering

We're delighted you're thinking about becoming a foster carer. This is just the start of a really exciting journey towards changing a child's life for the better.

But we know it's a massive decision, and finding the right fostering agency to support you through that is crucial.

As a not-for-profit fostering agency, we put children at the heart of everything we do. When you become a foster carer with us, you're not just joining a team. You'll become part of a family which lives and breathes this ethos and works together to ensure the very best outcomes for our children and young people.

In this brochure you'll find lots of information about fostering in general, as well as what you can expect from Team Fostering – including how we'll give you all the support you need, so you can concentrate on giving a child everything they need.



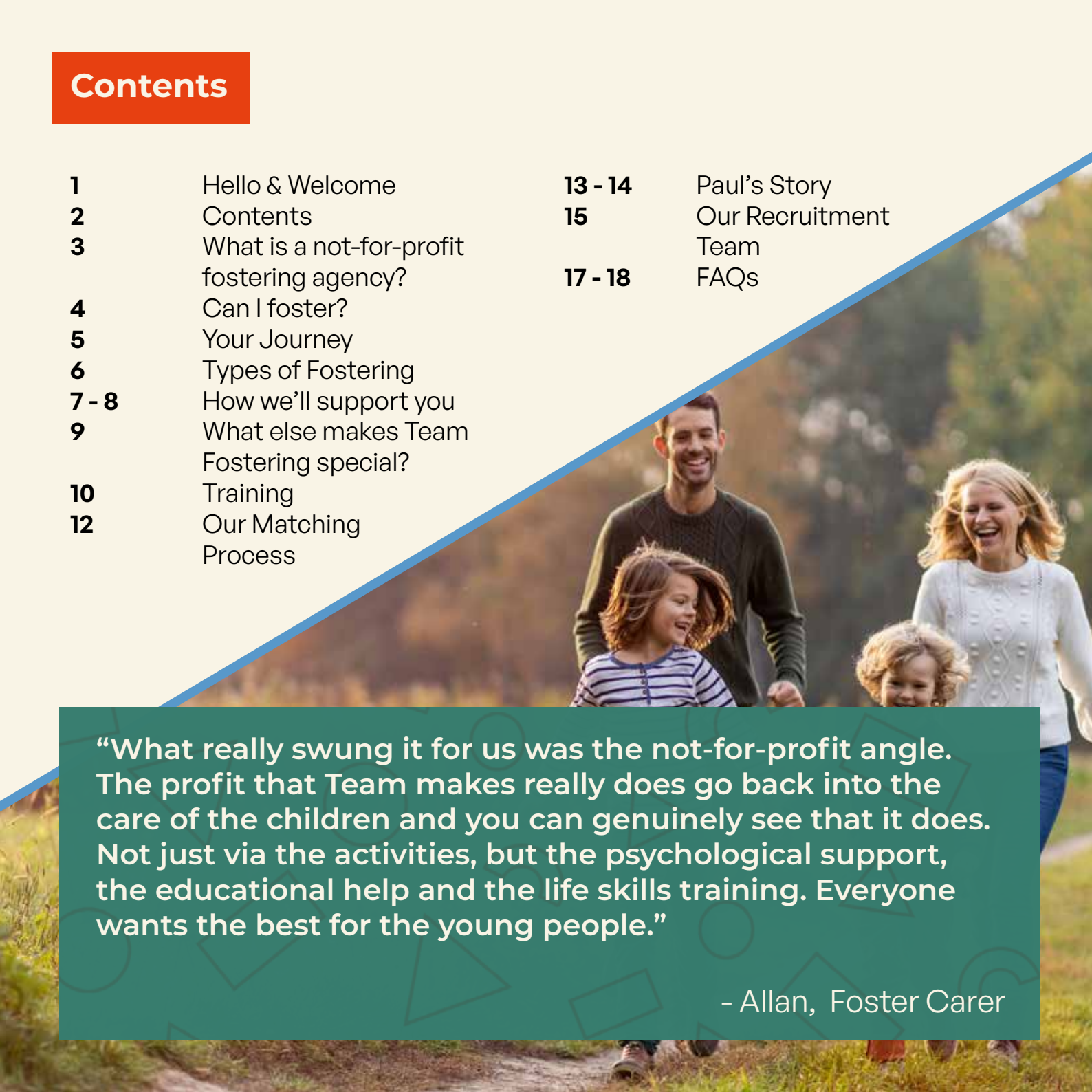
If you've got any questions please get in touch with our friendly recruitment team who'll be happy to talk to you more.

You can reach them on **0800 292 2003** or by emailing **info@teamfostering.co.uk**.

Kathryn Hayes
CEO, Team Fostering

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“What really swung it for us was the not-for-profit angle. The profit that Team makes really does go back into the care of the children and you can genuinely see that it does. Not just via the activities, but the psychological support, the educational help and the life skills training. Everyone wants the best for the young people.”

- Allan, Foster Carer

What is a not-for-profit fostering agency?

Team Fostering was born around a kitchen table in 2001 – out of the shared belief of our founding members Peter Richardson and Walter Young, that independent fostering agencies shouldn't make a profit from children and young people in care.

This belief has never changed and will never change.

Being not-for-profit means we have no shareholders taking a cut of the money. Instead, 100% of our surplus money goes directly into funding additional support and services for our children, young people and foster carers.

It also gives us the freedom to listen to and act upon things they would like to see. The reality of this for foster carers means more support services, more activities, annual holidays, additional training and much more which you can read about later on.

Everyone at Team Fostering takes great pride in our not-for-profit status. If you pop over to our website and watch the videos we've made with some of the team you'll see how much it underpins their love of working here.



Can I foster?

As a foster carer, you'll open your home to a child or young person who is not able to be looked after by their birth parents. This can be for a variety of reasons including illness, neglect or instability at home. It can be for a short or longer period of time.

We're looking for people who can provide a stable, safe and loving home environment whilst also having the skills and experience to navigate the fostering journey. You might have had children yourself or have experience working with them in a professional or voluntary role. It goes without saying that you love being with children and young people and will throw your all into being their advocate and cheerleader – celebrating their highs and helping them through their lows. With a sprinkling of fun and humour too of course.

At Team Fostering our foster carers come from all walks of life – with different backgrounds and life experiences. We welcome everyone – regardless of race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or age.

Basic criteria

Although we champion lots of different types of foster carer, we do ask that you meet some basic criteria first. These are:

- You have a spare bedroom which can be used exclusively by a child or young person.
- You are over 21 (there is no upper age limit)
- You have either a car or access to regular, reliable public transport to take children or young people to school, appointments or visits to friends and family and to attend training
- You are available to care for a child or young person 24/7, although we will consider foster carers who are self-employed or employed part time if it is flexible
- If you are in a relationship, you have been together for a minimum of 2 years. Being a single carer is not a problem and we have many single foster carers with us.

We know from years of speaking with potential foster carers that everyone's circumstances are different. So whether you tick every box or not, we're always happy to have a conversation. It might be that now is not the right time but we can help advise what the right time in the future might look like.

Your 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.

During each stage you'll get the opportunity to meet different members of the team who'll all form part of your overall experience at Team Fostering.

Initial enquiry:

After you've reached out to us – whether that's through our online enquiry form, a phone call, email or from talking to us at an event, we'll have an initial, informal chat to tell you more about fostering and find out more about you. This will progress to a more in depth conversation, called a screening call, should you wish to get the ball rolling.

Initial home visit:

If we haven't discussed anything which would prevent you from fostering, we'll organise for an assessing social worker to come and visit your home. They'll check it's suitable for fostering and get to know more about you.

Application:

We'll assess all the information gathered so far, and if we think you have everything needed to be a great foster carer we'll invite you to apply. You'll then receive access to an online application form. If you complete this within 2 weeks you'll receive £250 upon your approval as a foster carer.

Assessment:

The assessment takes between four and six months. This includes carrying out legally required checks and references and obtaining more information from you. You'll also attend our four-day Skills to Foster training course.

Fostering Panel:

At the end of your assessment you'll be invited to a Panel meeting, where your assessment will be discussed and we might ask any final questions. Approval. After Panel, all information goes to our Agency Decision Maker who will then confirm your approval as a foster carer with Team Fostering.

Types of Fostering

So you've met the basic criteria and like the sound of a not-for-profit agency. But have you thought about what type of fostering would suit you best?

There are lots of different types of fostering and as part of the enquiry and assessment process we'll get to know more about you so we can support you in making that decision.

Short-term Fostering

When local authorities identify that a child must be cared for outside of their family home for a limited period.

Parent and Child Fostering

Looking after both a young parent and their child whilst providing guidance to help them make a positive start to their parenting journey.

Long-term Fostering

Provide ongoing care for children who are unable to return to their families, offering them a safe and stable environment.

Sanctuary Seeking Children

Provide young people fleeing conflict and war in their own country with the support they need to start again and settle in the UK.

Short Break Care

Temporary foster care to provide a break for a child's main carers. You'll need to be available for a combination of weekends and longer periods of time across the year, both in term time and school holidays.

Step Down Fostering

Support children transitioning from residential care back into a family environment. We offer an enhanced support package for this type of fostering called Bridge to Belonging.

How We'll Support You

Many of our children and young people have experienced trauma in their lives and supporting them through this can be extremely rewarding. However, it also comes with challenges, and we pride ourselves in the support we provide our foster carers, so we can overcome the tougher times together.

You'll have a dedicated Supervising Social Worker, based locally, as well as access to 24/7 support. Our joined up ways of working mean that even if your social worker isn't available, you'll be able to pick up the phone and speak to someone who knows your situation.

Some of our other support services include:

Education and Support Service

We have an outstanding Education and Support Service in each region who provide dedicated, bespoke support to our children, young people and foster carers.

This includes things like:

- One-to-one educational support
- Targeted support for improving wellbeing and stability
- Liaison with schools
- A jam packed schedule of activities and events
- An annual Team holiday
- A range of social groups tailored to different ages
- Providing opportunities for young people to develop their life skills
- Events to celebrate achievements

Psychology Support

We work with experienced psychologists who understand the impact childhood trauma can have on mental health. They provide therapeutic and psychological support to our foster families through workshops as well as tailored online and in-person support where needed.

Family Support Service

Our team of Family Support Workers are there to complement and enhance your training as a foster carer. They work closely with other teams to ensure a joined up, tailored approach and can build learning about therapeutic parenting, supporting children with additional needs and signposting to additional services as well as offering a safe space for foster carers to share any challenges they might be facing in our Carer Support meetings, held in person at our offices every month.

FosterTalk

As a foster carer with Team Fostering you'll get membership for FosterTalk which provides independent support. You'll have access to things like legal and financial advice, allegation support and insurance cover and a 24/7 counselling helpline.

“My Supervising Social Worker has been an incredible support throughout my journey. Her unwavering commitment and understanding nature create an environment where I feel truly valued.”

- Nazelko, Foster Carer



What else makes Team Fostering special?

Alongside our top notch support system, there are a host of other benefits you get as a foster carer with Team Fostering.



Competitive fees which vary depending on the age and needs of the child



21 nights short break care (otherwise known as respite care)



Life Assurance scheme



Car mileage and Christmas allowance



5 year loyalty bonus



Start up fund to enable you to kit out your spare room



Access to memorial funds for supporting young people with things like driving lessons or travelling adventures



Up to £1200 reward for Word of Mouth referrals

Training

At Team Fostering we're passionate about giving our foster carers the skills they need to be successful in their role and to prepare them for what fostering might bring.

This starts during the assessment process and continues throughout your time as a foster carer.

Skills to Foster

Skills to Foster is our pre-approval training programme which all potential foster carers will undertake during their assessment process. This four-day course takes place at your local Team Fostering office and is an opportunity not only to learn more about fostering but also to meet some of our team and those who are going through the assessment process at the same time as you. Although you'll cover some serious topics it's a relaxed and informal learning environment and we always like to inject an element of fun to our sessions. You'll also attend some additional online courses alongside this.

Induction training

During your first year as an approved foster carer you will complete the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Care. This is a national requirement for all foster carers and you'll have a number of mandatory training courses to attend which cover essential competencies and skills that foster carers need to deliver the highest quality care for children with complex needs.

Ongoing training

As a not-for-profit fostering agency, part of our reinvestment goes towards the continuous professional development of our foster carers. Ongoing training is essential so you will always have access to further learning. You'll have your own Personal Development Plan to highlight specific training needs and advanced training opportunities are available for those in more specialist areas of fostering or for those seeking higher level qualifications.



Our matching process

Matching the right child to the right foster carer is of the utmost importance to us and we know the impact it can have on the outcomes for our children and young people when we get this right.

Our locally based Family Finding teams invest time in getting to know you and your family so that we can make the best possible match for you, alongside your Supervising Social Worker. This personalised, in-depth approach takes into account your skills and abilities, location, any preferences you have, what you've been approved for, other household members including birth children or foster children already with you, regular visitors to the home and sleeping arrangements.

We work closely with the Local Authority and foster carers when matching a child. You'll be an important part of matching meetings and will have space to ask questions, reflect and say no if you don't feel you could meet the needs of that child.

At Team Fostering the whole family is part of the journey and birth children are also welcomed at activities and other events, where you'll often find our staff and their own children too.

“Throughout the matching process we are listened to. Team Fostering take the time to get to know your profile and requirements when looking at potential matches and they always check in BEFORE any decisions or your name is put forward.”

- Melanie, Foster Carer



Paul's Story

Paul started his fostering journey along with partner Barry a few years ago. Looking after his god-children during lockdown made him rethink his priorities and pick up the phone to Team Fostering.

He explains, ***“I’ve always worked in retail to help and support vulnerable children. Raising the money is one thing, but actually going and doing it is totally different. It’s always something I wanted to do, to be on the front lines and actually do it myself.”***

Paul said: ***“I got a phone call from someone who was absolutely amazing. He was so warm and it really made you feel like he wanted you to be part of the team.”***

Paul and Barry have looked after a number of children, some with more complex needs and Team Fostering were there to offer an extra helping hand when needed.

Paul said: ***“They put some extra support in place where they came and took them out for a little bit to give us a bit of a break.”***

“You appreciate they were thinking of us and wanted to make sure we weren’t burning out.”

Paul explains how the training at Team Fostering has also been invaluable.

He said: ***“The training’s been fantastic because it’s really stuff you need to know. I’d already done lots of training with Team before we even got our first young person.”***

“It really helped my understanding with attachment and trauma and all that sort of stuff.”

For Paul, fostering has given him so many rewards. He said: ***“Seeing someone’s confidence grow, seeing them learn new skills, seeing them just grow up and have fun, and be able to be kids and just be safe and happy. It makes you feel really special.”***

“I’m so glad that we did start fostering because it’s the best decision that we ever made.”



Our recruitment team

Whether you've been thinking about fostering for a while, or you just want to get some initial information, our recruitment team are here to help.

You can contact them by calling **0800 292 2003** or emailing **info@teamfostering.co.uk** and you'll get to speak to one of our Recruitment and Engagement Officers, Emma and Carly.

Emma

Emma has been with Team Fostering for many years, having previously worked in our Family Finding Team. She's a fountain of knowledge and loves a chat so you'll be able to pick her brains about anything to do with Team Fostering or fostering in general.




Carly

Carly is always a friendly and welcoming voice on the other end of the phone, who lives and breathes our not-for-profit status as this is what brought her here in the first place. She loves being out in the community and chatting to people at our recruitment events and is ready to answer any questions you might have.

You can watch videos of Emma and Carly talking about their role, as well as videos from other members of the team over on our website.





“We were initially told that Team Fostering was one big family and that has felt true right from the start of assessment up until present day. We’ve both felt so welcome, included and supported by everyone we’ve met. It truly has been a magical journey!”

- Katie, Foster Carer

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.



Contact us:

0800 292 2003
teamfostering.co.uk

Find us on social media:



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