



INTRODUCTION

Pyramid Care CIC recruit, assess and approve people from diverse backgrounds and ethnic groups who have a desire to offer 'substitute' care to children and young people who are 'looked after' by the local authority. As a foster carer **"You are giving a child in need the chance of a better life"**. You will be part of a professional team responsible for providing the best level of care, to give the child the best possible outcome.

Pyramid Care CIC Fostering Service works closely with local authorities to find suitable foster care homes. Our foster carers provide safe, secure and supportive homes for as long as the young person needs it. Foster carers are responsible to provide the day to day care of the young person, however foster carers do not have parental responsibility. This remains with the birth parent or is sometimes shared with local authority as a result of a court order.

We offer many types of fostering; Temporary fostering - children may come to stay with you for several weeks or months until they can either return home, be adopted or permanently fostered; Permanent fostering - The difference between permanent fostering and adoption is the legal status of the child; Respite



care and short term breaks - Some foster carers wish to provide short breaks for young people, often enabling their carers to have break or sometimes their birth families; Family based family assessment— offering a family based environment with a basic level of observation, support and monitoring usually to a parent and their baby; Specialised foster care - meeting the needs of young people with disabilities.

We recognise and acknowledge that foster carers fulfil a very important and challenging role.

This is why, we at Pyramid Care CIC offer a high level of support, training, supervision and opportunities to share and reflect with other carers.

We particularly need foster

carers who can offer supportive homes for:-

- Brothers and sisters who need to stay together.
- Children over 12, some with complex needs.
- Family Assessment placements (mother and baby).
- Children between 5-12, whose behaviour at times may be challenging.
- Children aged 5-16 who need permanent carers.





ABOUT US

The Fostering Agency with a difference! It would appear that Pyramid Care CIC Fostering service will be the ONLY fostering service for children that is a Community Interest Company. It is certainly the only one in this region. The advantages to this are considerable for all parties involved – the staff, the foster carers and the children/ young people. By using the CIC model, rather than making considerable profits for the Directors of the company, all profits that we will make, will be re-invested into the service. We will charge competitive prices, but our service will be exemplary. We will be able to use the profits to purchase the additional support to help both the young person and the carers to help maintain and enrich the placements.

We believe that children need and deserve a good start in life, and that a happy and secure childhood is vital to help them reach their full potential. We cannot change what has happened in the young person's life before they are part of our service, but we can make a huge difference once they are. Foster carers play the key role in this process. We need to creatively and genuinely support our carers to achieve this. This may be through increased respite packages, specific training, therapeutic support, additional funding for identified activities etc. Within traditional agencies, these may be considered luxuries... we will consider them to be essentials .

As a fostering agency we will be actively listening to our carers and young people, and learning from them in order to effectively evaluate and improve our service. Every member of our service – staff, carers and young people will be working towards reaching their full potential- the core belief of Pyramid Care CIC. We want our staff team to know that they are working within an environment that is supporting them to be the best worker that they can possibly be, and carers to feel that they have the right support, resources and service to enable them to succeed and be the best possible carer that they can be. Finally we want each and every young person that receives a service from Pyramid Care to be part of the process of assessing and reviewing their care needs to ensure that as a team of professionals we are doing our best to promote their self actualisation.

This is a 'living' ethos and a 'living' service. As such it will be defined by its users, and will evolve as it develops and grows.

"To find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better...to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded". Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Our aim is to succeed....



THE START OF YOUR JOURNEY



YOUR DECISION

Following the initial home visit by the social worker, if you decide that you would like to become a foster carer, we wish you to know that at any point during the assessment process, you are free to withdraw. We would encourage you to discuss this with your social worker first, as there may be alternative options available to you depending on your reasons.

TIMESCALES

There are no set timescales, but to give you a rough idea, we anticipate that most assessments will take between six to eight months to become a foster carer. We advise our social workers that are undertaking assessments, that they should aim to visit each fortnight for approximately two hours. You can expect around 8-10 visits during this time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All the personal data collected during the assessment process is treated with the utmost security and confidentiality.

The Enquiry & Application Process

Information for Foster Carers' pack received after initial enquiry

Home visit by Pyramid Care Social Worker - Visit report produced

Your decision to go ahead - Signed application received

F Form Assessor allocated

Assessment Begins

- Home visits/ Family assessments
- Individual and Joint interviews
- Statutory Checks
- Medical Report
- Interviews with personal referees
- Medical Advisor consulted

Assessment Report completed

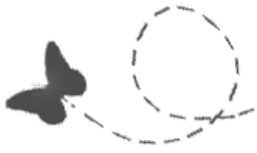
Attendance of 'Skills to Foster' training course

Report presented to panel

Recommendation to Agency Decision- Maker

Agency decision on approval

You and the Local Authority are informed of your approval as a Pyramid Care Professional



HELPFUL CHECKLIST

Think, reflect and discuss

You and your family— ask yourselves...

Are your expectations realistic?

Do you have the patience, flexibility, time and energy to give to a foster child?

What aspects of fostering do you feel most comfortable with?

What aspects of fostering do you feel least comfortable with?

Can you work as part of a team?

Are you willing to challenge all forms of discrimination?

What kind of children would you prefer to foster?

Is everyone in your family supportive of the idea of becoming a foster family?

Your home— Do you have...

A spare bedroom?

A home where children can feel safe and are not exposed to risks?

Assessment— Are you...

Prepared to undergo all the necessary checks during the assessment stage?

Ready to explore your feelings about childhood by reflecting on your own experiences?

Training— Are you...

Academically able to undergo preparatory training i.e. basic reading and writing skills?

Willing to openly participate in group training sessions?

Prepared to attend all training courses required and expected of you?

Your circumstances— Are you...

Already experienced in caring for young people which may support your application?

Open to all types of fostering or would you like to specialise? What type of fostering are you best suited to?

Able to be at home for younger children or for when older children get home from school?

Able to make the commitment to look after a child for as long as they need?



ABOUT YOU

There is no such thing as a 'typical' foster carer. We need a wide range of different types of people from different backgrounds and with different racial and cultural heritages. Many people worry that their gender, age, income, sexuality, marital status or accommodation may preclude them from becoming a foster carer, but this is not the case.

As part of the assessment process, the Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly CRB) will check that you have not committed an offence which will exclude you from fostering. You will also be required to consent to a health check, to rule out any severe health problems. If you have any concerns about these, we strongly recommend that you discuss it with your visiting social worker rather than assume it is a problem. They will be able to discuss the issues knowledgeably and confidentially. Very often we will be able to put your mind at rest, and continue with your application.

You Do Need :-

- A spare bedroom for the young person.
- Basic skills to undertake the assessment and future training.
- Genuine commitment to look after a child for as long as they need to stay with you.
- Be at home for younger children, or when older children get home from school.
- Be patient, flexible, energetic with time to give to a young person.
- Provide a home where children feel safe and are not exposed to risks such as smoking, dangerous dogs or

unsuitable adults.

"The difference you can make is extraordinary."





SUPPORTING YOU

Pyramid Care Fostering Service offers a high level of support to foster carers. The support is flexible, creative and will vary day to day, placement by placement.

Our standard support consists of:-

Supervising Social Worker— You will have a supervising social worker, who will telephone you on a regular basis and visit you monthly for support and formal supervision. You will be able to contact them directly by telephone or e-mail during standard office hours.

Therapeutic Support Worker— The therapeutic support workers are responsible for organising activity days and social events. They will also take the lead in supporting children and foster carers in relation to therapeutic support and guidance.

Out of hours Support — Fostering is a 24/7 job, so Pyramid Care CIC Fostering Services ensures that they are contactable 24/7. An out of hours support rota will get you directly through to a member of the team who can help.

Monthly Group Supervision and Networking— You will have the opportunity to meet with other foster carers and network with each other once a month. You will also have an opportunity once a month to meet with foster carers and an external psychologist who will give guidance and support in relation to understanding children's behaviours and give practical support with regard to not only managing those behaviours but also emotionally supporting foster carers.

Social Events— We arrange social events from time to time where you will be able to socialise with other carers in a relaxed environment.

Skills Development Training— We offer a number of training workshops to help develop your skills as a foster carer. The workshops will bring practical knowledge together with expertise and theoretical knowledge or understand-

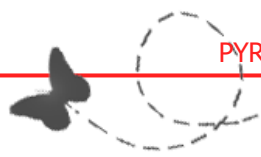
ing about the subject.

Respite Provision— We offer up to 14 days respite support per year to enable carers to 're-charge' their batteries, and retain the energy and physical and emotional well being that is essential in providing quality foster care. Some families have specially assessed and approved members of their own family and friends network who either move into their home to care for the foster children or look after the foster child within their own home. Other foster children may stay with an alternative Pyramid Care foster family whilst their own take a break. Some foster carers choose to provide an activity holiday for their foster child, and this provides the family with a break as well as a holiday experience for the child.

Professional Development— Each year we will hold a review for you as a foster carer. The purpose of this review is to confirm your ongoing support, ability and enthusiasm to foster. Your skills and ongoing training needs can also be assessed and highlighted.

Independent Support Calls - as well as formal supervision, all carers receive a support call each month from an independent Social Worker to ascertain whether or not carers are happy with the service and whether or not there are any outstanding areas the Agency have promised but not undertaken. The outcome of these calls are relayed directly to the Responsible Individual to ensure that any actions necessary are undertaken.





INTRODUCTORY TRAINING

Foster caring is a career option. Like most careers, training is a vital component. Pyramid Care CIC Fostering Service provides all your initial training to give you the basic skills to foster. On going training is also provided to keep your skills up to date and relevant to your individual needs.



The initial training is the 'Skills to Foster' course. This training covers areas such as; What carers do, safer caring and understanding behaviour. This also provides an opportunity for applicants to reflect upon the possible impact fostering will have on their own family and evaluate their motivation and abilities to foster. Feedback is given to applicants, and further training needs can be identified by both the applicant and assessing social worker.

Pyramid Care CIC aims to ensure that prospective foster carers will complete the 'Skills to Foster' training before they are approved as carers. Please do not worry that you will be tested or required to sit a final exam. All you will need, other than basic academic skills and common sense, is a willingness to participate, share and learn.



ONGOING TRAINING

We are committed to providing the opportunity for carers to learn, develop and grow both as carers and as individuals. In addition to the initial 'skills to foster training', we offer a wide variety of training workshops in-house. Many of which are designed to top-up or develop existing carers' skills. Our workshops also provide the opportunities for carers to share their knowledge and experiences with each other. This is an invaluable opportunity, which enables learning from a 'hands-on' and insightful perspective. During your supervision sessions you may also express an interest or a need for specific training, which we will then look at supporting and enabling possibly from an external resource. The following are examples of the training workshops that we provide:

- Safeguarding/Child Protection
- Equality and Diversity
- Behaviour Management
- Safer Caring
- Managing allegations against foster carers
- Paediatric First Aid
- Men who foster
- Women who foster
- Attachment and child development
- Importance of play
- Self Harm
- Diet and Nutrition
- Protective Behaviours
- Autism and ADHD awareness
- Health and Safety in the home
- Drug and alcohol awareness
- Understanding therapeutic processes
- Developing emotional intelligence
- The foster carer's role in Life Story work
- Bullying and Cyber-bullying
- Positive communication
- Record Keeping
- Neuroscience of Attachment
- PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy)
- Understanding and working with eating disorders
- PTSD and complex trauma
- Shame and Guilt
- Loss and Separation



THE FINAL PROCESS

Approval

Once your social worker has completed the assessment report, you will be asked to read it and sign it if you are happy with the contents. If you dispute any points in their report, you can talk to them before you sign. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, you can write your comments about your disagreement and send them to the panel with the report.

The panel consists of people with a wide range of knowledge of fostering and childcare. It is their duty to decide whether to recommend an applicant for approval. You are invited to attend the panel meeting and take part in the discussion. The panel will question the social worker about the report.

The panel will make its recommendation based upon the National Standards of Foster Care. The recommendation is then referred to the agency's decision maker. They will make the final decision based upon the fostering Approval Panel's recommendation. Once the decision is made you will be notified of the outcome of your application, and the Local Authority will be notified of your approval as a Pyramid Care CIC fostering professional.

Once you are approved and have signed the Foster Care Agreement, we will begin looking for a child (or children) to place with you. We aim to place children with foster carers who

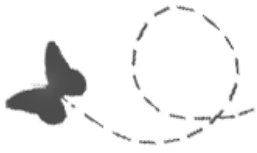
can best meet their needs and reflect their racial and cultural heritage where



possible.

We encourage an introductory period for every child where possible so that he/ she can meet the proposed foster carer on several occasions before moving in.

We will offer you a high level of support and guidance during your first placement, to ensure that you feel as comfortable and confident as possible.



FOSTERING ALLOWANCES

We know how hard foster carers have to work, and how much time, energy and commitment they put into the task of caring for children.

Pyramid Care prefers the main foster parent to be a full-time parent, and pay a fee that permits that to happen. We offer allowances that are generous and competitive with other independent agencies.

As a foster carer, you are self-employed and you earn a weekly allowance while you have a child or young person in your care. The allowance covers the child's basic needs, clothing, etc and includes money towards utilities and maintaining your home. It also includes a fee for the care you provide. Additional allowances may be paid at the child's birthday and at major festivals of the year such as Christmas. Other discretionary allowances can be paid for a child's particular needs – e.g. additional travel expenses, equipment, etc.

Placement	Allowance (per week, per placement)
0-18 years	Minimum of £390
Parent and child	Minimum of £500
Single placement *	Minimum of £500

Individual placements can vary on the extent of support provided and this is negotiated with the Local Authority.

* This is when a family may be approved for 2 or 3 placements but the Local Authority only wants one placement in, therefore blocking the other 1 or 2 placements.





WHAT'S NEXT?

If you feel you would like to explore fostering with Pyramid Care further, please contact us via:

Phone: 01905 622322 or 07916251524

Email: jackie@pyramidcare.org.uk

We will be pleased to arrange for someone to visit you to talk through fostering in more detail, and to answer any questions you may have.



jackie@pyramidcare.org.uk
07916251524