

Red Kite Fostering Information Pack

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
AND STEPS TO FOSTER



**The
Fostering
Network**

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**INFORMATION PACK
FOR FOSTER CARERS**
RED KITE FOSTERING

Red Kite Fostering

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01.

Who We Are

Red Kite Fostering was established in 2011 by director Carole Barnes. The same founding director remains at the heart of the company.

Based in Kington, Herefordshire, Red Kite are dual registered in England and Wales. We work with many Local Authorities across the West

Midlands and Wales. We have a dedicated team with extensive social work experience within the fostering sector that are focused on providing a fostering service that will improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

About Red Kite and what we do

We are a small, independent (family owned and run) fostering agency with low staff turnover. We are dedicated to supporting foster carers and families with our out of hours on-call duty rota, a duty worker Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, access to a family support worker and monthly support groups for foster carers.

We help to place children who cannot live at home with safe and caring families. We recruit family-focused foster carers and have a role in the assessment and placement processes involved in fostering.

In addition, we offer training, support, respite days and more to help our carers. We use our knowledge and experience to encourage all of our foster carers to learn and grow in order to make the best possible difference to the children in their care.

When you foster a child with us, you don't raise them alone. You're part of a team of people who are all committed to helping your foster child have a happier, healthier future.





02.

About

Fostering

The difference between independent and local authority agencies

Independent fostering, sometimes known as private fostering, are agencies that work closely with local authorities to find suitable carers for children. Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) were introduced to help meet the needs of the increasing number of children entering the care system. There were (and still are) not enough foster carers to provide homes for young people, so IFAs were designed to ease the pressure on Local Authorities by placing children that needed extra support with experienced and knowledgeable carers - which includes teenagers and those with complex emotional and physical needs. This has changed over time and IFAs today place children who have a range of needs with families who are able to care for them.

Local authorities are councils, and they're legally responsible for the

safeguarding of all children in the care system (including those placed through IFAs). They represent a county or a borough, such as Herefordshire or Powys, and, like all fostering providers, they place children and young people with families that will care for them whilst they can't live with their birth family.

As we are an Independent Fostering Agency, we work with the Local Authority to place children with foster families that are able to meet their needs. We recruit a range of carers, including those with long-term experience and brand new carers who are just starting their fostering journey. There is no shortage of children who need loving homes, so if you are a new carer we will do our best to make sure you will not be caring for a child that does not match your skills or experience.

What is fostering?

Foster carers provide a safe, stable family home to children and young people who can't live with their birth families. These young people are often vulnerable, scared and having a hard time understanding what is going on and why.

Young people may need to leave their homes for many reasons, including:

- Relationship problems
- Family breakdown
- When a child's welfare is threatened
- Parental illness

The children and young people placed with foster carers are from a number of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds and will display many behaviours depending upon their various experiences.

They may need to live with a foster carer for a few days until other arrangements can be made, or they may need somewhere safe and nurturing to stay for many years.

In many cases, a child will stay in foster care whilst professionals work with the birth family to help resolve their issues with the intention of reunification in the future. However, not all children who come into care can return to live with their parents. In these cases, the courts will decide the best option to make sure they are safe, stable and can grow throughout their childhood in a 'permanent' home. There are a number of options for permanence, including long term fostering, which you can read about in this pack.

Fostering is a unique role that will present challenges that require patience, resilience and commitment to overcome, yet it can also be hugely rewarding for both you and the child(ren) you look after.



What you need to become a foster carer

We actively seek out and recruit people from different backgrounds, ethnicities and cultures to become Red Kite foster carers. Fostering is about including and accepting people as they are and responding to their individual needs in order to help them flourish.

Whether you are single, married, divorced, widowed, or living with your significant other, have children (or don't), live in a large house, rent a flat, are in a same-sex relationship or have

specific religious or cultural beliefs – you can become a foster carer.

If you have any spent criminal convictions these will be discussed and explored, but, depending on the nature of the conviction, it won't necessarily prevent you from becoming a foster carer.

Fostering is about being able to respond to a child and help them thrive. Due to our desire to meet each child's needs fully, we are looking for people who can meet the following criteria:

Criteria to Foster with Us



Have a spare bedroom (that is spare full time)



Rent or own a property



Minimum age of 21 (no upper age limit)



Be committed to learning and training



Transferable skills or previous experience of caring for/working with children



Have British Citizenship Or Settled Status



Good support network, especially if you are a single carer



Good health and fitness

What types of foster care do we offer?

The range of placement options you can choose from reflects the different reasons why children and young people need fostering. It means each child gets the specific care they need, and you can make the best use of your specific skills.

Don't worry about choosing what type of placement is best for you now, though. We'll talk you through your options and help you decide.



01

LONG-TERM/PERMANENCE

As a long-term foster carer, you'll give a child or young person a stable home for the foreseeable future. This might be until they're an adult and ready to leave home.

02

SHORT-TERM

You'll care for a child or young person for a length of time that can range between a few nights to up to two years. During this time, a longer term care plan will be explored and discussed with you and the child. This involves finding a more permanent option for them.

03

EMERGENCY

We sometimes need somewhere for a child or young person to stay very urgently for their safety.

You'll need to be quite flexible with this sort of foster care as you'll need to be available on short notice.

Emergency foster care is often just for a few days until a more suitable home is found for the young person.

04

PARENT AND CHILD

These are short term placements where you'll give a home to a parent and their child. They'll look to you for advice, guidance and help with being a parent. It's often young parents, but sometimes older parents with their own issues need some extra help from a foster carer.

05

RESPITE

Respite carers help give other families some time off to rest by looking after their foster children for a short break.

06

BRIDGING

Red Kite provides bridging placements which bridge a child or young person onto a longer-term option as identified in their individual care plan. This may be a future move to a long-term placement, adoption or a return to their family. Foster carers offering bridging placements will work alongside the other professionals involved with the child to secure the desired future outcome.

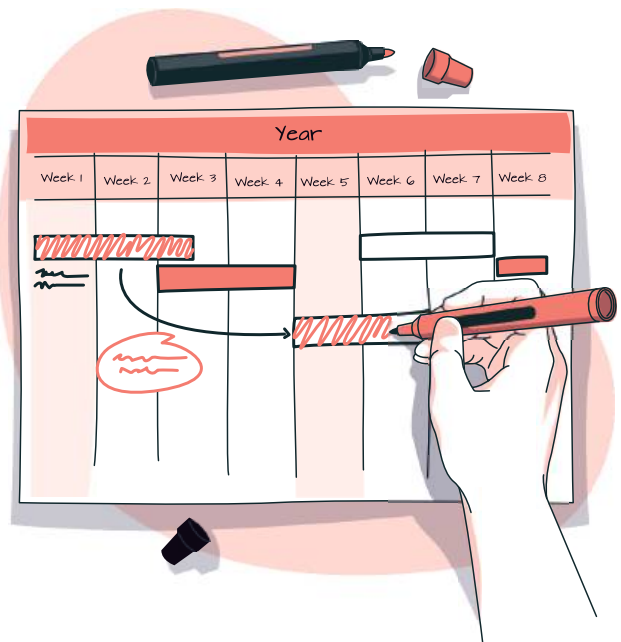


03.

Steps to
Foster

The steps to become approved as a foster carer

Applying to become a foster carer is an in-depth process but we will provide guidance at every step and full support. All we ask is that before you proceed you ensure you are fully committed to becoming a foster carer to save yourself the time if fostering is not for you. Please ask all the questions you need upfront which we will be happy to answer.



For more information about the fostering process, we encourage you to use the following resources to keep you well informed.

The Fostering Network

Advice and information about fostering, including policy and practice, training, managing finances and relevant news and updates.

www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

CoramBAAF

An independent membership organisation for professionals, foster carers and adopters. Here you can find more information and advice about fostering.

www.corambaaf.org.uk

01

Making Contact

Once you have received this information pack, we will reach out to provide you with an enquiry form where we will ask you some initial questions to see if you meet the basic criteria to foster. After you have returned the completed form to us, we will arrange a screening via phone to chat to you about your application.

Visiting You at Home

After we have spoken to you on the phone, your supervising social worker will arrange to visit you at home to discuss your application in greater detail. At this stage, we will complete a few formal checks such as obtaining a photocopy of your ID, discussing potential health and safety issues, getting to know you and your family, taking a look at the spare room(s) that you have and we will ask you to consent to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Please note that this visit will last approximately two hours and, if you are applying to be joint carers, both applicants will need to be present.

03

Deciding to Proceed

At this stage, Red Kite will make a decision about whether to proceed with your application. We would advise that at this stage you ask all questions that you have before your application form is sent. Once this form is completed, the formal assessment will begin.

04

Skills to Foster

Skills to foster is a three day training course that you will be required to complete once you have submitted your application.

Fostering Assessment

The assessment process, sometimes called a 'home study' or 'Form F', essentially involves a review of your suitability to provide foster care. This will be undertaken by a qualified social worker and you will receive full support at all stages. This will involve undertaking a medical check with your GP, providing personal and employment references (including from ex-partners) and checks with Local Authorities, schools and other agencies (which you may have previously applied to or transferred from). This assessment is an in-depth and very detailed check into your personal history, which is important to be aware of as you start the process.

Panel Recommendation

Once all the required information has been collected, you and your social worker will attend Panel. This is a meeting between independent specialists who will be able to discuss any possible concerns and gain further detail about you and your application. Following this meeting, the Panel will make a recommendation about whether you are able to foster and advise the ages and number of children you can look after.

Final Decision

The agency decision maker will then review every part of your application and make a final decision.

Ready to Foster!

Congratulations! Once you've reached this stage you are an approved Red Kite foster carer.



04.

What's
Next?

Now you're an approved foster carer

As outlined in the steps on the previous page, you will receive specific training through a three-day training course to prepare you to foster and to achieve "Skills to Foster". Attending the course will also allow you to meet other carers, share experiences and learn more about foster care. This is a mandatory course that carers must complete before being taken to panel.

Once you have been approved, you will then be a registered carer with Red Kite Fostering Agency and be able to take children and young people into your home and care for them. You will be allocated a Supervising Social Worker to help and support you. The path to becoming a foster carer requires commitment to the assessment process and our current foster carers are happy to share their experiences of the assessment process. They help us present the Skills to Foster training.

It is important to us that we get the right match between our foster carers and the children or young people in need of placements, and so we follow a careful, clearly defined process. Local Authorities from across the UK will contact us to discuss specific

children and young people in need of a foster care placement, and the availability of suitable carers.

Once we have found an available foster carer whose skills match the needs of the child or children, we will contact them to discuss the placement in more detail. As a foster carer, you are not obligated to accept any children unless you think the match is right for your family.

Throughout your role, you will also be expected to remain committed to training and developing yourself to better care for children. We may assign you training courses that are appropriate for a child you are preparing to care for and we will discuss your development with you on a regular basis.





05.

What We
Offer

Benefits of fostering with us

24-HOUR SUPPORT

We always have a staff member available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to help with any support and advice you need.

TRAINING

You will receive tailored training programmes to enhance your skills and experiences. This will help you take more complex placements if you wish to in the future and support your development as a carer. Training is free and provided by or arranged by Red Kite.

ALLOCATED SOCIAL WORKER

A social worker will work with you on a one to one basis to ensure you receive full support. They will meet with you regularly and work closely with the Local Authority's social worker.

MEMBERSHIP TO THE FOSTERING NETWORK

All our approved carers receive full membership automatically, giving you access to carer insurance and support.

FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER

If you need help with a child or young person, our family support worker will provide extra support.

RESPIRE

If you wish, we will provide short breaks from fostering for you during the year.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

We run events for children such as day trips and family support groups.

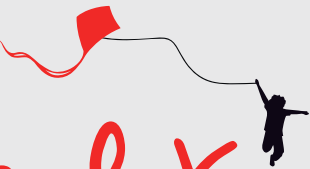
FINANCIAL REMUNERATION

You will receive full allowances and competitive fees to cover the child or young person's needs.

We advise speaking to a member of the team about our current rates.

REGULAR SUPPORT GROUPS

We hold support groups for you to meet with other carers and share experiences.



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