



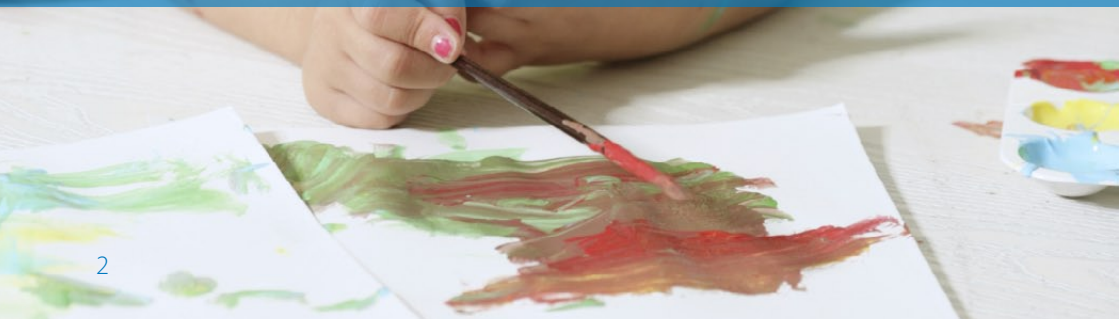
**You could be
a foster carer**



Fostering for the future



As foster carers it will be your job to work towards supporting the individual children you care for to meet these in ways that are relevant to them. It is our job to support and equip you for this task.



Foster Care

Throughout Great Britain many children cannot live with their natural family and need to be looked after by their Local Authority. The Local Authority will very often look to place the child within an alternate family or foster placement.

Nationally there is a shortage of foster carers and Acorn House (Fostering Services) Ltd. was established to recruit families who could provide a home for such a child or children on behalf of the Local Authority.

We at Acorn House are committed to the Government's agenda for Looked After Children set out in a document called Care Matters. This identified five outcomes that all children should be given the opportunity to meet:

Be healthy

Stay safe

Enjoy and achieve

Make a positive contribution

Achieve economic well-being



You do not need to have qualifications to be a foster carer other than the ability to provide a caring, secure, affectionate home life for any child in your care. However, you must be available to spend time with the child and treat them as you would your own child.



Who Cares?

Our carers come from all walks of life and from different ethnic groups and cultures. They can be single, married, living as a couple or in a civil partnership. Some are in employment while others are not; some may have children of their own at home, some have no children or have children who have grown up and left home.

Your home would need to be large enough to provide comfortable accommodation and the child would need a bedroom of their own (same sex siblings may be able to share a room).

Some foster carers look after one child and some look after several. Children in foster care can be aged from birth to eighteen. Some foster carers like to care for babies and some like to look care for older children. They may be with you for varying lengths of time from a few hours to several years, depending on the needs of the child and their care plan.



The Role of the Foster Carer

As a Foster carer, you will have a professional role as one of a team dedicated to serving the best interests of the child, in line with the child care plan.

The childcare plan is devised by the Local Authority. This plan will be closely tailored to the individual needs of the child. It may state that the child be reunited with their family at an appropriate time or it may decide that an alternate permanent family be found.

Where appropriate you may be required to host meetings between the child and their parents, welcoming them to your home and supervising the contact between them. You will also be responsible for the child's health and education and will be expected to make an all round contribution to ensuring that they reach their fullest potential.

You will be required to complete regular progress updates and reports in respect of the child and share information appropriately with the relevant professionals involved with the care plan, such as social workers, health workers etc. Training and advice is available to support you with this.



Challenges & Rewards

The experience of coming into the care system or moving to a new carer and leaving everything familiar to them can be very traumatic for a child or young person, whatever the situation they are moving from.

They may respond in a variety of ways. They need to feel loved and accepted for the person they are despite how they may respond at times. They will need time, attention and understanding and to know it is OK to be angry sometimes.

At Acorn House we work hard to match you with a child or young person who we believe you have the abilities and skills to meet their needs. We will discuss the information we have with you and you are not obliged to take a placement if you don't feel it is something that you could manage. We want to ensure as much as possible that placements can be maintained for children and young people as disruptions can be very damaging.

While some children can present their carers with real challenges in terms of their behaviour at times, many children and young people settle in well with



their carers and the challenge then is to support the child or young person to move on positively once the placement comes to an end due to them returning home or moving on to adoption or they leave care. The rewards of fostering are many – most of all, the enjoyment of seeing the children in your care grow to become confident, secure young people or even simply helping a child achieve a milestone that many other children take for granted.

Acorn House will pay you a foster care allowance towards the cost of providing for the child's needs. Additional support may be offered on agreement with the child's social worker if, for example, you are looking after a child with special needs or a troubled teenager who needs special attention. It may be that the child you foster has problems in education. **Acorn House** have arranged to purchase the services of a well known national organisation to support carers and children in working with schools where such issues arise.

The Acorn advantage

Acorn house fostering services provides the highest standards of training and support for our carers.

Every fostering family has their own supervising social worker allocated to them. They will come to know you very well and will be your main link with the Agency. They will provide advice, support in meetings, monthly support / supervision sessions and will usually be involved in discussions around matching and placing a particular child with you and the process that follows. You will also get to know other supervising social workers and carers through regular training and carers support meetings and events.

We operate a duty system which enables staff to be available to our carers 24 hours a day all year round. Whether you simply require some advice over the phone about an issue concerning a child or whether our presence is required to support you more directly there will always be a member of staff to assist you when you need it. **Acorn House** pays for all its foster carers to become full members of the Fostering Network, 'the UK's leading charity for everyone with a personal or professional involvement in fostering' (www.fostering.net). They publish a range of policies, resources and training materials and can provide support and guidance to carers going through difficult situations such as allegations.





Training

At **Acorn house** we believe that training is an integral part of a foster carers ongoing development towards providing the best and informed care for children who cannot live with their families. It is therefore an expectation that foster carers commit to ongoing training throughout their fostering career to ensure they gain and maintain the skills and knowledge they need for this important role.

There are new guidelines for the training and development of all people working with and caring for children from the CWDC (Children's Workforce Development Council: www.cwdcouncil.org.uk). We at **Acorn House** welcome this move as it professionalises the important job of caring for children and young people and however much we think we know about caring for children there is always more to learn! We run a program of courses including: first Aid, food hygiene, child protection, health and safety, record keeping, safe caring, managing difficult behaviour, etc. Elements of some of these courses will count towards the NVQ level 3 in caring for children that all foster carers have the opportunity of working towards. Support and guidance for the NVQ is bought in for foster carers completing this course.

We have experienced trainers on our staff team and also have a bank of freelance trainers who are very knowledgeable in their fields. Prior to becoming foster carers all our applicants attend the Fostering Network Skills to Foster program which we facilitate.

The next step

Interested? Would you like more information on becoming a foster carer with Acorn House?

Please ring us on: 08456 44 90 77 and we will arrange for one of our social workers to visit you in your own home to discuss fostering in more detail with you. He or she will ask you some further questions and give you chance to explore further whether fostering is right for your family.

If after this visit you are sure you would like to proceed and we are in agreement with this then we invite you to apply to become a foster carer with **Acorn House**. You will be provided with an application form to complete which includes requesting you to provide three referees, a Criminal Record's Bureau check form and will be asked to provide your signed consent for us to approach certain bodies and the NSPCC to ensure that no information of a negative nature is held regarding you and your conduct with children and young people.

If you are worried about any of these checks or feel there is anything that may come up that could prevent you from caring for children please discuss this with the worker. We will seek to work openly and honestly with you at all times and we may be able to set your mind at rest if it is not a relevant offence.

We will also provide you with a medical form and ask you to attend your GP for a fostering medical to ensure that you are fit and healthy for the role.

At this point you will be allocated an assessor. This may be the person who visited you initially or another worker. They will complete a Form F assessment of you and your partner if you have one and will also meet with any children you have living with you. The assessor will also visit the referees you have identified and any grown up children. They will also need to interview any ex-partners that you have cared for children with. Again any concerns you have about this should be discussed with your worker.

During the assessment process you will also receive visits from a manager from the company to gain your views on how the assessment is going and ensure you are happy with the process.

The assessment takes between three and four months and once complete, forms a lengthy document which you must read and sign your agreement to its content. The document is then sent to our foster panel members who make a recommendation as to whether you should become foster carers.

We look forward to working with you and wish you all the best as you prepare for one of the most rewarding jobs around!



Fostering for the future

Acorn House (Fostering Services) Ltd

info@acornhousefostering.co.uk

www.acornhousefostering.co.uk



Useful Contacts

The Fostering Network
87 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8HA
Phone: 020 7620 6400
Fax: 020 7620 6401

Email: info@fostering.net
Web: www.fostering.net

BAAF
Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street,
London, EC1N 8TS
Phone: 020 7421 2600
Fax: 020 7421 2601

Email: mail@baaf.org.uk
Web: www.baaf.org.uk