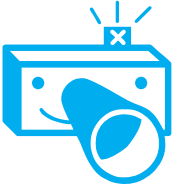


placement choices

increasing placement
choices for children

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introduction

CareVisions Residential is a leading provider of flexible and innovative solutions for children and young people with complex needs. It makes a positive difference to children who may have challenging behaviour, many of whom have experienced numerous placement moves before being referred to us.

The care services include:

- Small therapeutic residential homes
- Crisis intervention for children in times of trouble
- After care support and preparation for children leaving care at 18

To learn more about CareVisions please read the company brochure or visit our website on: www.carevisions.co.uk

CareVisions Specialist Fostering, is a separate not for provide company established to provide foster placements for children and young people.

This information booklet has been designed with the help of young people, Foster Carers and staff from CareVisions. It will give you more information about fostering and what will happen now that you have made an initial enquiry. It is not likely to answer all your questions, but will give you an introduction to fostering with CareVisions.

CareVisions is looking to recruit Specialist Foster Carers who share our vision and are passionate and committed to providing the highest level of care to children and young people.

what is our foster care service and how does it differ from conventional fostering?

Our Specialist Foster Care scheme is different from conventional foster care as it provides a range of placements for children and young people who are likely to have had many placement breakdowns.

We are keen to recruit carers who would be willing to offer the following types of placements.

- **Short term/Crisis placement** – which may mean a child comes to stay with you at short notice, for a couple of days, or for a few weeks, until their main care arrangements are sorted out.
- **Long term placement** – where a child is in need of a family placement that will be for a longer period of time, and is likely to include regular contact between their foster carers and their parents or other relatives.
- **Permanent placements** – where child is placed in your care for the rest of their lives. They may still have contact with their parents or other relatives, but that there are not plans for them to return full time for their care.
- **Respite/Crisis Care** – these placements provide a break for full time carers, or offer short term "time out" for a child and their family when things have become tense at home and it is felt that a break would help the situation.

All of our Foster Carers receive payment for their skills, regular training and appropriate 24 hour support. We pride ourselves in providing a professional service with prompt personalised support.

Fostering with CareVisions provides children and young people who have complex needs and challenging behaviour an opportunity to experience family life. As their previous placements may have been unable to meet their needs, these young people have often had a number of different moves, living with different carers and sometimes in different residential homes.

CareVisions provide training for carers, 24 hour support from a skilled social work team and support from other experienced foster carers.

Our Foster Carers are paid a professional fee for each child placed in their care, plus the maintenance cost of caring for each child.



why do children need to be fostered?

Children are looked after in foster care for a variety of reasons. These include:

- Their parent has experienced significant personal challenges that have had an impact on their ability to care for their children. Some examples include mental illness, addiction or death of the main carer
- Problems with family relationships, including coping with challenging behaviours
- Abuse or neglect by parents or other members of the family
- Some of our children are unlikely to ever return home and need specialist support to meet their needs, until they reach maturity.

who can be a foster carer?

Anyone can apply to be a Foster Carer as long as they have what it takes to care for children who are not their own. There are no age limits, though you do have to be physically fit, you can be single, married or in a partnership. Some carers have their own children, others don't. It doesn't matter if you are in or out of paid work at the moment, own or rent a house. Children benefit from living with families who have similar backgrounds, culture, language, religion food and general life style, therefore people of all ethnic origins are needed and welcomed. It may be necessary, however, to avoid by several years the ages of your own children.

Fostering with Carevisions is specialised and challenging and carers need specific skills and abilities. Prospective Foster Carers are expected to undergo a thorough preparation and training process before they are approved.

how do foster carers get assessed and approved?

It's essential that vulnerable children and young people are placed in safe and caring environments, where they feel welcome, cared for, respected and valued. It is also important for our carers to feel they are ready and able to take on any challenge, obviously with support if and when needed. For these reasons all of our prospective Foster Carers go through a preparation process, during which their abilities as a carer are assessed.

Following your initial enquiry, you may be invited to an information evening. If a number of people apply at once or one of our Social Workers who will call you to arrange a home visit, at a time convenient to yourself.

During this visit you will have an opportunity to discuss fostering in more detail and discover what the process of assessment entails. Please feel free to ask any questions at this visit, as our worker will also be asking you some basic questions to help from a view of whether fostering is right for you and your family at this time. Once this visit has taken place, a decision is made as to whether you meet the criteria to become a Foster Carer and you can decide whether you wish to proceed with your application.

If we all agree to continue, your application will progress to the assessment and approval process. This will allow you to find out more about the realities, challenges and rewards of fostering. The formal approval process includes visits from a designated assessment Social Worker and help with completing a detailed application form. This is designed to identify the relevant skills which you already possess, and identify those, if any, that need to be further developed. Your assessment Social Worker will explore with you whether fostering is the right option for you and your family, and will ensure that you understand the financial and practical support that carers for CareVisions will receive.

You will also be expected to attend a series of evening or weekend preparation, development and training sessions, which will help you decide if caring for someone else's child is right for you and your family. This is called The Preparation Group, which introduces potential carers to the needs of fostered children; working with parents/ families and fostering services; and issues such as managing behaviour. If there is a need, we will provide an input for sons and daughters of Foster Carers, who will have an important role to play if their family chooses to foster.

There is a legal requirement to complete statutory checks on all prospective foster carers and any members of the household over 16 years. These include an enhanced disclosure from Disclosure Scotland, contact with former partners, particularly if you have had children together, references from Health, Social Services and Education Services.

We will also ask applicants to have a medical examination paid for by CareVisions. We will also ask you to identify referees who will be asked to provide written references about your suitability to become a foster carer. A Separate reference leaflet gives you more information.

Following completion of the assessment and training course, a final approval is recommended by a 'Fostering Panel' which is made up of a group of people including Social Workers, Foster Carers, people who were fostered as children, and representatives from the social care community. The Panel reach their decision after considering the following: information from your statutory checks, written information from your referees, medical opinion and the written assessment completed by your assessment worker, as well as some written competencies that we will help you to prepare. It is important that you attend this panel.

We aim to undertake an assesment quickly and try to ensure that we work to a deadline of 16 – 18 weeks (sometimes we complete our assessments quicker) from initial enquiry to becoming approved as a Foster Carer. At all stages our Fostering staff and administration staff will support you. You will always be encouraged to ask questions and can decide to withdraw from the process at any time. We plan to reduce this time period.

is anyone prevented from being a carer?

To protect fostered children from harm, there are some offences that prevent people from fostering. These are offences under Section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and Schedule 1 of the Children and Young People Act 1933 in England and Wales, and under Schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 in Scotland. If you have any questions regarding this issue please do not hesitate to discuss it at the initial stages of your enquiry.



what do foster carers get paid?

One carer in the household is approved as the main carer and therefore expected to do this full time. They are paid a professional fee, and an outline of our current fees and associated expenses, is included in the information sent to you.

Carers will also get full insurance cover, membership of the Fostering Network and through time training opportunities in further and higher education.

Foster Carers are members of a professional team, all working together to promote the best interests of children and their families. Below are descriptions of some of the people belonging to that team:

carer's assessing supervising social worker

This Social Worker is part of our team that is responsible for recruiting, preparing and 'assessing' new Specialist Foster Carers. After someone has been approved as a Foster Carer, they are linked with a Social Worker who provides them with individualised supervision and support. This Supervising Social Worker is the link between the carer and the other members of CareVisions Fostering Team.

child's social worker

This is the person who works closely with the child and their family. They are often the person who brings the child to the carer's home for the first time. They visit the child on a regular basis to discuss any problems or issues that have arisen, and to check the child is healthy and happy. It is also their responsibility to make plans for the next step in the child's life. As a foster carer you will have a lot of contact with a child's social worker, and it is important that you let them know if you have any anxieties about the child in placement, or about the plans for them.



child's family

With most foster placements, the aim is to return the child home to their own family. If a child is placed with a Foster Carer on a long-term basis and is not returning home, the carer needs to help them keep in touch with their family (if this is appropriate).

Carers often find themselves working closely with the parents or other relatives. They may come to visit the child at home or the carer may take the child to meetings with them at a place arranged by the Social Worker.

All our carers will be offered support in relation to contact with birth parents.

other foster carers

CareVisions are committed to offering an inclusive and personalised service to Foster Carers, and they will be involved in all areas of service development.

Support involving other Foster Carers will include:

- Access to a regular foster care support group
- Access to a "buddying" scheme which will partner all new carers with experienced carers
- Access twice a year to the Chief Executive of CareVisions, who will chair a Foster Care Forum. This will provide an opportunity for carers to ask questions and to contribute to the development of the service.



education

Many children in foster care may experience problems with their education. Disruptions and changes in their lives often mean that they are struggling to keep up with their peers. They may have had several changes of school. Problems and uncertainty in their lives may be expressed through 'challenging behaviour'.

Foster Carers need to develop close relationships with children's schools. They may need to help staff recognise the difficulties a child or young person is experiencing in their life.

health

Foster Carers will also be working closely with health visitors and doctors. All children living with carers will need to be registered with a GP, Opticians and dentist.

specialist support

Children we care for have suffered emotionally distressing experiences and may need help from therapists and counsellors. The involvement of a therapist will be discussed as part of the care planning arrangements for children. The therapist may undertake one-to-one direct work with the child. Depending on their needs, the child may also participate in short or long term therapy involving play, art, music or drama. The therapist or counsellor may want to involve the carer in some aspects of this.

foster care facts

The Fostering Network is an organisation that campaigns for improvements in the quality and range of fostering placements available for children who are not able to live at home. The following information is from their website. For Further statistical information visit www.fostering.net

There are just over 72,000 children and young people looked after on any given day in the UK, over 51,000 (70 per cent) of whom live with 43,000 foster families.

The Fostering Network estimates that a further 10,000 foster carers are needed across the UK.

scotland

- 5,716 children looked after away from home on 31 March 2007.
- Over two-thirds of these children (4,055 or 71 per cent) were living with foster families.
- There are approximately 3,200 foster families in Scotland.
- The Fostering Network estimates there is a shortage of at least 1,700 foster families.

For more details see the Looked after children 2006-07 statistics on the website of the Scottish Executive.



