

Carolina
HOUSE TRUST

Quality services meeting the needs of young people

**An Introduction to
Fostering with
Carolina House Trust**

Becoming a Foster Carer

Our foster care service provides safe, caring homes for children and young people who for various reasons are not able to live with their birth families.

There is always a demand for our services, which means we are always ready to welcome new carers.

Looking after vulnerable and sometimes confused young people is not the easiest thing in the world but the rewards can be immeasurable. Knowing that you are making a difference to a young person's life is very fulfilling. That is what keeps our carers dedicated to fostering.

What is Fostering?

In brief, fostering involves looking after a young person in the foster carer's home. This may be for a short period whilst things are sorted out at home or for a longer period depending upon the situation.

Not only do foster carers support the young person but they also work in partnership with the young person's family, school, health professionals and social workers.

Who are we looking for?

Foster Carers come from all walks of life and backgrounds: couples, families and single people from all ethnic backgrounds and ages. Young people coming into foster care show their distress in a variety of ways and to be effective in helping them you need to have patience, understanding and resourcefulness. Your personal qualities are more important to us than your age, experience or qualifications. You'll be:

- Over 21
- Tolerant, patient and flexible with lots of common sense
- In good health
- Willing to work closely with the Trust and other agencies e.g. social work, education and health services
- Have a sense of humour
- Be available full-time in order to supervise young people excluded from school or ill etc and be able to attend all necessary meetings
- Interested and committed to providing good quality care to young people and to helping them to achieve their potential

What Accommodation do I Need?

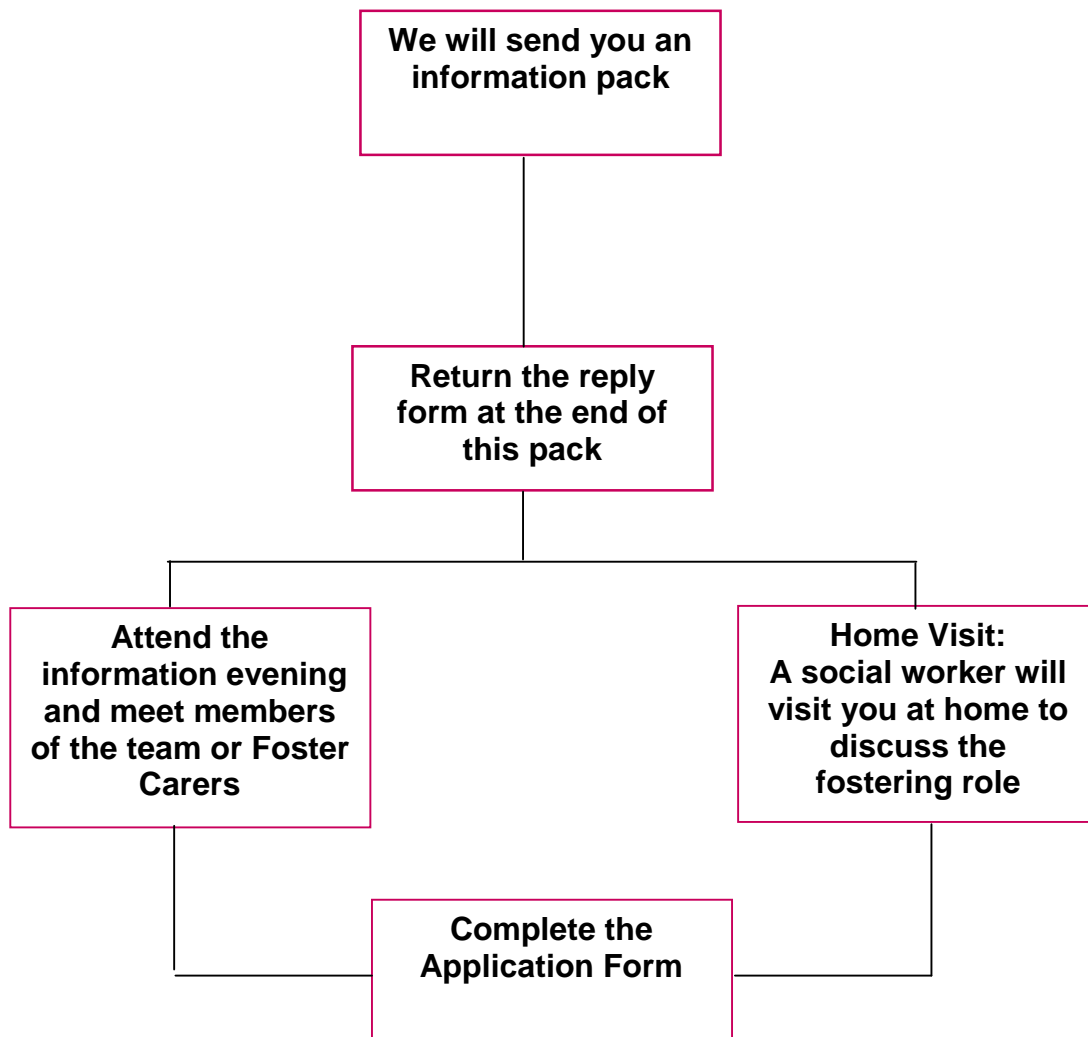
Foster carers may either own or rent their homes. They may live in a flat or a house. It is essential for the young person you foster to have a room of their own with the exception of siblings who may prefer to share a bedroom.

Who is Fostered?

Young people are looked after by the Trust for many reasons, such as:

- Parent's abuse of drugs and / or alcohol
- Parental physical or mental health problems
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Physical or emotional neglect
- Family relationship difficulties
- Bereavement
- Offending
- Or sometimes the young person's behaviour has become too difficult for their parents or other carers to manage.

THE STEPS TO BECOMING A FOSTER CARER-STAGE 1



Once we have received it we will proceed to the next stage of the process

THE STEPS TO BECOMING A FOSTER CARER – STAGE 2

Personal Assessment

The assessing social worker will undertake a detailed study of you and your family. The assessment process involves various checks being undertaken and preparatory training.

Checks

- Disclosure checks will be carried out on you and any members of your family who are over the age of 16 years
- Your family GP will undertake your medical check
- Referees will also be interviewed regarding your suitability to foster

Preparatory Training

The 'Skills to Foster' Course

Foster Care Panel

The assessment will be presented to the Foster Care Panel. The Panel will make a recommendation regarding your approval.

Agency Decision Maker

The Director of Operations will make the decision as to whether or not to accept the Foster Care Panel's recommendations. This decision will then be sent to you in writing.

Placement

A child or children will be placed with you following approval.

What checks will be carried out?

As caring for someone else's child is a big responsibility, by law, we must carry out certain checks, namely:

Disclosure (Scotland) Check

With your consent we will ask Disclosure Scotland to carry out an Enhanced Disclosure Check on each adult over 16 years in your household. This will inform us of any convictions you have had in Scotland or elsewhere. If you have a criminal conviction it does not necessarily mean that you may not care for other people's children, but it does mean that we will have to discuss your convictions with you. If you do have any convictions then it would be best if you mentioned them to us during our initial discussions.

Medical References

Your General Practitioner will be asked to provide us with a medical report. If you have been seeing a Health Visitor recently we will also get in touch with them. Please let us know if you have a history of medical problems.

Local Authority Checks

We will check if you have had contact with social work agencies in the past and whether this is relevant to your application. As well as any other checks as required.

Employment History and Employer's Reference

We will talk to you about your employment history since you left school. If you are currently working then we will also ask for a written reference from your employer. If you are not working then we will ask for a written reference from a previous employer.

Personal References

We will need two references from people who know you and your family. We will visit both of these referees to discuss your application.

Who decides if I am suitable?

The last stage in the approval process is when the assessing social worker presents their assessment to the Foster Care Panel, along with any other relevant information that may assist the Panel in making a decision. You will have the opportunity to read these reports and add your own comments and will be invited to attend the Panel. The Panel is chaired by an independent person with a background in childcare and fostering. The Panel members all have a great deal of relevant experience. The Panel will make a recommendation in relation to your application and the final decision about approval is made by the Agency Decision Maker who is the Director of Operations for the Trust.

Ensuring the safety of young people is paramount, therefore the Trust reserve the right not to proceed with the home-study assessment if information, or concerns that cannot be resolved arise at any point of the process.

How do I become a foster carer?

The first step is to get in touch and register your interest. You will either be invited to attend an Information Evening or a Social Worker will visit you at home to provide you with further information. If you wish to proceed and you meet the criteria then the next step is for you to complete an application form. On receipt of your application an assessment will be completed in partnership with you.

This is the longest part of the procedure as it can take up to six months from you signing the application form to being presented at the Foster Care Panel. The assessment is very detailed as we have to be sure that you can offer a safe and caring home to a young person. It is also an opportunity for you to think about whether you really want to become a carer and, if so, what type of fostering would suit you best.

The assessing social worker will visit you a number of times to talk in detail about the qualities you will need and for you to demonstrate the skills and experience you have to be a carer. These are called competencies. We assess your competencies by gathering information about you from a wide range of sources (checks and references) and from the evidence you give us yourself about your skills. This will help us establish your suitability. As part of the assessment you will also be expected to attend a series of 'Skills to Foster' Groups which explore the role of being a foster carer in more detail.

In doing this personal assessment your assessing social worker will build up a detailed picture of your strengths and abilities, your home life, your relationship (if you are applying as a couple) and the commitment you could give to a young person. You will have the opportunities to find out more about the rewards and reality of fostering.

What will Carolina House Trust offer you?

Foster carers are a vital part of the services provided by the Trust and we believe that a partnership between foster carers and us is vital to ensure that issues can be addressed together and the best possible quality of care provided. As such we are committed to providing:

Link Worker

Once approved as foster carers you will have your own link-worker, who will be a qualified Social Worker. He or she is your main point of contact and will provide you with ongoing support, guidance and supervision. Your link-worker will also help you identify areas of training or personal development that will enhance your knowledge and skills.

Peer Support

Our carers are always happy to share their experiences and support one another. When you are initially approved we will 'buddy' you with another, more experienced, carer who you can telephone when you need advice.

Support Group

Regular support group meetings provide both formal and informal support to our carers.

Out of Hours

Apart from the support offered during working hours the Trust also provides out of hours telephone support to our carers. Support is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year.

The Fostering Network

The Trust purchases annual membership to the Fostering Network for every carer. This provides our carers with a vital support resource.

Training

We will prepare you for your new role with some high quality training. Before you are approved as a foster carer you will take part in a 'Skills to Foster' course.

After you are approved you will be expected to attend 3 days mandatory training per year. You will also have the opportunity to study for recognised accredited courses such as the AKAMAS Level 3 Course designed specifically for foster carers.

Allowances 2011—2012

An allowance is paid for each young person fostered. A personal fee is also paid to you. All allowances and fees are reviewed on an annual basis but the Trust follows the recommended allowances as set by the Fostering Network.

Age Allowances	2011/12
0 -4	£131.47
5 - 10	£149.76
11 - 15	£186.43
16+	£226.74

Fees per week		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Rates given on application		

The skill level scheme is principally a scheme to reward length of service with the Trust and to recognise that carers skills increase with experience of the fostering task. All new carers will start on level 1.

Additional Payments

Paid Break 14 days per annum
Mileage
Christmas/Religious Festival / Birthdays

Short Term Placements

You will be asked to care for young people within the categories (age, gender and number) for which you have been registered as a foster carer. Young people may be placed with you at short notice or on a planned basis. Their length of stay with you can range from an overnight to up to a year, depending on the circumstances and they will either return home or move on to a long-term placement.

Long Term / Permanent Placements

You will be asked to care for a young person or sibling group who cannot return to their birth family and for whom adoption would not be an appropriate plan.

The young people are likely to be of any age although mainly in late primary or early secondary school years and will need you to care for them until they are independent. If you decide to apply to become a long-term foster carer, then one of the main objectives would be for you to care for the young person throughout their childhood and to provide a safe and stable environment to enable him or her to grow both physically and emotionally and to reach their full potential. Long-term foster carers, like other foster carers, will work alongside other professional staff in order to further the young persons progress. For example, they need to work closely with the young persons school in order to try and enhance the child's educational opportunities.

They also need to be able to facilitate ongoing contact between the child and the birth family, if this is deemed to be in the young persons best interests. Long term fostering demands a commitment to the young person that allows them to feel a part of your family in a way that emulates the normal close bonds that we all need to develop into secure adults. Where the placement is deemed to be a permanent fostering arrangement this commitment is on an ongoing basis and seldom ends when the young person is old enough to leave the care system. It is akin to adoption without the legal implications.

Often, carers find this to be a difficult task to undertake but it is most important for the child that it is managed in a sensitive and caring manner. Children need to know that you will be there for them especially through the difficult teenage years.

Emergency Placements

Emergency placements are made usually on the day the request has been received or within 24 hours of referral. If the child remains in placement then the placement will become categorised as one of the other placement types.

Singleton Placements

These are situations where a young person should be in a placement where there are no other foster children or young people. This is where it has been assessed that the young person's needs are such that they require constant supervision and support.

Mother and Child Placements

There is a developing need for mother and baby placements and this is being considered as another service option within the Trust. This will require identifying and training specific carers who have the accommodation and personal resources to help these young women.

Short Break Placements

You will be asked to care for a young person for one or two weekends a month and occasionally on weekdays during school holidays. The young person could be living at home, in a residential unit/children's home or be living with other Trust foster carers. Some families only require support for short periods of time and several planned weekends are sufficient to support them through a difficult time. Short Breaks however are often used to give our foster carers a well deserved break.

The aim of a short break is to be flexible in order to meet the needs of the young person and the families that care for them.

CAROLINA HOUSE TRUST - FOSTER CARE – INITIAL INFORMATION FORM

Personal Details	Applicant 1	Applicant 2	
Full Name			
Date of Birth			
Address			
Post Code			
Phone numbers	Tel: Mob	Tel:	Mob:
Email Address			
Religion			
Ethnicity			
Current Occupation			
Names and dates of birth of children living at home and elsewhere. Please indicate if children are adopted	1.	DoB	home/elsewhere
	2.	DoB	home/elsewhere
	3.	DoB	home/elsewhere
	4.	DoB	home/elsewhere
No of bedrooms		Available:	
Describe your home			
Are you currently receiving any medical treatment?			
Do you have any current or previous convictions?			
Please indicate why you would like to foster and what you feel you may have to offer. Have you enquired previously about fostering, if so where?			
Where did you hear about us?			
Signed		Date	

**Please return this form to the Foster Care Team, Dunsinane Avenue,
Dunsinane Industrial Estate, Dundee, DD2 3QN**