

Join Our Family

A guide to becoming a foster carer
with Three Circles



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WE ARE WITH YOU ALL THE WAY

Thank you for your enquiry to foster with Three Circles. You could be about to start a very exciting journey. We are so incredibly proud of what we do at Three Circles and the difference we have made to the lives of children and young people since we established in 2012.

Fostering is one of the most rewarding things you could do. Whether you are already fostering and interested in transferring, or you are completely new to fostering we would like to talk to you.

This booklet has everything you need to know about fostering with Three Circles, and how to take the next steps.



WHAT IS A FOSTER CARER?

What is foster care?

Foster care is about looking after children and young people when they are unable to remain within their own families. You can help to make a real difference to a young person's life at a time when they need it most. The length of time you may look after a young person can differ, but in every situation there is a common goal - a stable and nurturing home.

What is a foster carer?

Foster carers play an important role caring for children and young people to make sure they get the care and support they need. From attending school and health appointments to taking part in extra-curricular activities, foster carers look after the children in their care on a day-to-day basis. A foster carer is a person who is able to be flexible, and accepts that there are sometimes situations for which they might feel unprepared. A foster carer is also a team player working with other members of the team – social workers, teachers, parents of the child's friends, and health care professionals.



How is fostering different from adoption?

Fostering is different from adoption because the local authority remains responsible for the young person as their 'corporate parent'. In many cases, it is also important to maintain links with the child's family through regular 'contact' meetings, which foster carers will help facilitate.

CAN YOU FOSTER?

Just as there is diversity in fostered children, foster carers come from a variety of backgrounds and have different life experiences, skills and qualities to help meet the needs of children and young people in foster care. There are, however, some common criteria that most fostering services require from you:

- to be at least 25 years-old (although by law you can apply to foster from 18)
- to have a spare bedroom big enough for a young person to live in
- to be a full-time resident in the UK or have permission to stay here
- to be able to give the time to care for a child or young person, often on a full-time basis



You can be single and foster



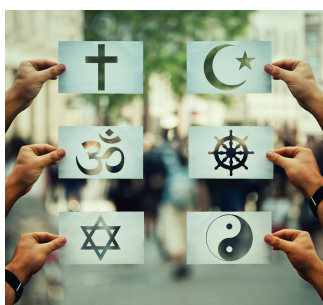
You don't have to own your own home



Your sexual orientation won't prevent you from fostering



Your gender identity won't prevent you from fostering



Your religion won't prevent you from fostering



You don't need any formal qualifications



You can sometimes continue to work and foster



There is no upper age limit to foster

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOSTERING

Parent and child

Parent and child fostering is a specialist type of fostering where a young parent and baby comes to stay with you at a time when they need extra support. Occasionally it may be two parents and a baby.

Emergency foster care

There are times when a child may need to be placed in care due to unforeseen circumstances. Providing emergency care at short notice means children can be in a safe environment sooner rather than later.

Long-term foster care

Long-term foster care is the child's plan for permanence, as recorded in their care plan. The foster carer has agreed to be the child's foster carer until they reach independence.

Short-term foster care

Short-term fostering is usually for children and young people who are either in care proceedings or whose parent(s) or care givers are unable to look after them. It could be for weeks, months or possibly for up to two years.

Respite foster care

Respite foster care is fostering for a limited time only and provides foster carers with a break. It's a great source of support for foster carers. It can benefit both the foster carer and the child by giving them a break from their usual routine.

Step-down care

Step-down care is support for young people making the transition from residential care to a fostering home. They may never have had a stable home life so you will help them understand what a safe, loving home means.

Unaccompanied Asylum seeking foster care

Asylum seeking foster care provides homes for young unaccompanied asylum seekers. Sometimes young people have travelled a long way and have been through significant difficulties. You will make them feel safe and help them adapt to a new country.



OUR MISSION

Children and young people

Three Circles Fostering focuses all of its professional operations and administrative systems on securing highly successful personal, social and educational outcomes for all children and young people placed with us.

Social work

The National Minimum Standard (15) that relates to the appropriate placement of children and young people with individual foster families, and the support provided to families by our social workers will never be adversely influenced or undermined by commercial considerations. Families will be chosen to meet the needs of children and the necessary skills and abilities of individual foster carers (and their existing households), to meet those needs.

Education

Success in education for children and young people is crucial to their life-chances, and is a key and underrated factor in enhancing the stability and quality of their homes. The NT&AS education service commissioned by Three Circles Fostering is a high priority for all children, and forms an integral and inseparable part of our support.

Charities

Three Circles Fostering supports other organisations working with children and young people, with significant charitable donations. These donations are made unconditionally, and not to promote our own commercial interests. Our chosen charities are named on our website.

Foster carers

All foster carers will be considered and treated as equal partners within the agency, along with their social work, education and administrative colleagues. Foster carers will be consulted, respected and listened to on all key decisions that have an impact on the service they provide to and that lie within the remit of Three Circles Fostering.

Three Circles Fostering

Our objective is to ensure that local authorities are always confident that children live within happy, safe and secure families, who themselves will receive the highest quality social work, education and administrative support. Three Circles Fostering has a recognisable and tangible "family atmosphere" at its heart, with all that implies for its children, foster carers and agency staff.

Inclusion

Three Circles Fostering is fully committed to the genuine celebration of difference, and of the right of everyone to be who they wish to be. We pioneer excellence on behalf of children & young people, we are committed to inclusive practice. We are committed to sharing best practice with local authorities, schools and other children's organisations, as we ourselves are open to learning from others.



WHY FOSTER WITH THREE CIRCLES?

Social work:

We have an excellent social work team who are there to support you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Your supervising social worker will be there from the moment you are approved as a Three Circles carer and will help with anything that may come up along the way.

“The activities for our children are fabulous and the support all my children have received over the period I have been with the agency has been exceptional” Foster Carer



Education:

Every young person we care for is allocated a teacher from NT&AS who will work with you, the young person and their school to try to achieve the best possible outcomes. They will listen, teach, advocate and help young people to succeed in education.

Youth engagement:

We have a youth engagement team entitled KICup. This includes an independence scheme, youth zones, events, consultations, media and community engagement.



Peer support

You will have access to regular regional support groups. We will link you with other carers in your area to develop positive networks.

Independent support

Every carer at Three Circles is a member of the fostering network. You will have access to a variety of benefits to help you in your role, including legal protection insurance and help lines.

Consultation

We will consult you regularly so that you have a voice in how the organisation is run. We produce an annual report so that you can see how your views have impacted on service delivery.

Family focused

You will be considered an equal part of Three Circles and will be welcomed warmly. We are proud to call every carer a part of our family. Our offices are covered in family photographs and the door is always open.

Ethical leadership

We are proud of Three Circles. We believe that everyone is equal. We respect each other's differences and will not discriminate against others because of any protected characteristic.



"We have enjoyed every moment working for three circles fostering, and could not ask for a better team, our supervising social worker is fantastic and always gives us the correct support when we need it, we feel very supported in our role" Foster Carer



7 STEPS TO FOSTERING

1

GET IN TOUCH

You're ready to take the first step to becoming a foster carer, let us know by contacting us and expressing an interest in fostering. You can call, or fill out a contact us form on the website.

2

INITIAL VISIT

We will make an initial visit to your home to meet with you and your family, to explore whether fostering is right for you.

3

APPLICATION FORM

You'll be asked to complete an application form which will help us to begin your assessment. Initial checks will be carried out to make sure there are no concerns. These include police, medical, employment and personal references.

4

SKILLS TO FOSTER COURSE

You'll be invited to our 3 day course to help you find out more about fostering, the children who need foster carers and how you can prepare for a child coming to live with you. You will also complete a short online safeguarding course.

5

FOSTERING ASSESSMENT

An independent social worker will work with you to complete your fostering assessment. They will visit you regularly to get to know you and assess your suitability to foster. They will write up all the information from your assessment and the report will be shared with you.

6

PANEL

Once your assessment is complete, it will be presented to the Fostering Panel. This is an independent group of people who specialise in fostering. The panel will make a recommendation as to your suitability as a foster carer.

7

APPROVAL

Our Agency Decision Maker makes the overall recommendation for you to be approved following panel after reading all paperwork. You'll be allocated a social worker called a 'Supervising Social Worker' who will help you to prepare for a child coming to stay with you.

MOVING TO THREE CIRCLES

Transferring from another fostering agency is a big decision. We want to make transferring to us as simple as possible and we are here to support you every step of the way.

What we won't do:

Three Circles does not offer direct payments to persuade you to change agencies and join our family of foster carers. In fact, if you are well supported and happy at your current agency, it would be our sincere wish for you to remain exactly where you are.

Want to know more?

If you do decide to join us, you will be considered an equal with everyone already here at Three Circles. The agency is a friendly and wholly inclusive agency who treats its foster carers fairly and with great care, respect, and equality as with all our colleagues. It is a family run agency that we want you to enjoy being a part of. There is always a happy, child-centred, and welcoming vibe around the place. Our commitment is to our children and young people. This drives what we do, how we do it, what we spend our money on, and our vision for the future.

WHAT TO EXPECT

All fostering agencies subscribe to the Fostering Networks Transfer Protocol. This details that you have the right to freedom of movement between fostering services. You can read the protocol on the fostering networks website.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The process of transferring will need to be discussed on an individual basis. The average length it takes is 3-4 months, but it could take longer depending on circumstances. We endeavour to make sure the process is as smooth as possible.

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

If you would like to explore joining Three Circles, contact us today to talk to one of the team. We will only talk to your current agency if you make a formal application to us.

JOINING THE FAMILY

After being approved by panel, you will enjoy the benefits of being a carer with Three Circles.

TRAINING COURSES AND CAREER PROGRESSION

At Three Circles you will benefit from training and career progression from the day that you apply.

During your assessment

You will attend 'Skills to Foster' which is Initial Foster Carers Training. When you are approved We are proud of the wealth of training courses we offer to carers. Some of the courses include:

- First aid training
- Cultural awareness
- Contact
- Staying put
- Child development
- Drugs and alcohol
- Sexual behaviour
- Internet safety
- Complaints and allegations
- Promoting Positive Care
- Safeguarding
- Children and domestic violence
- Preparing for independence
- Radicalisation
- Risk assessment
- Attachment and trauma
- LGBTQ+ inclusion
- Monthly training relating to education

"The supervision and support provided by the agency is fantastic" Foster Carer



Specialist training and formal qualifications

We have a range of additional courses for foster carers to widen their scope of skills and enhance their knowledge. Examples include parent and child fostering and level 2 in the children and young peoples workforce.

We offer all carers the opportunity to sit GCSE and A Level courses through our partnership with NT&AS. We also offer carers the opportunity to access a bank of 100's of online training courses through the social care training hub.

WHAT OUR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SAY



“They do stuff with us and make me feel safe”

“They treat me like one of the family”



“It’s the best house in the world”



“I enjoy living in this environment, as I am part of the family”



“I like my family because they give me toys to play with and care”





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Where possible, we have utilised [language that cares](#) through this document

