an introduction to fostering

People blossom with Orange Grove

www.orangegrovefostercare.co.uk
our mission

is to provide excellent family care for children and young people, enabling them to achieve their full potential in a stable and supportive foster home where best practice, quality and safe care is delivered.

We hope you find this brochure useful. If you would like to discuss anything in greater detail please do not hesitate to contact us on

08458 734455 or foster4us@orangegrovefostercare.co.uk

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national but local

Many thanks for your interest in Orange Grove Fostercare, which we very much appreciate.

Orange Grove Fostercare was established in 1996 as an independent fostering agency in order to provide a range of excellent foster home placements to children across the UK. We work in partnership with 100+ Local Authorities, and have earned a reputation for quality, built on our dedication to fostering and the unwavering support we offer our highly trained foster carers.

We have established regional offices which enable us to provide our carers with localised support services. Our foster carers welcome the support from their local team where they receive dedicated social work support, comprehensive training and regular meetings. Most importantly, there is always someone on the end of the phone or in the office that will know you and your foster child/ren. Whether you need help with an overwhelming problem or simply need an understanding ear, the local teams are your local partners.

Zoé

I contacted Orange Grove Fostercare and began the process. Immediately liked my Orange Grove Social Worker and soon realised that registering would be an easy experience. I have been with Orange Grove now for nine months and I am thrilled with the level of support I receive, both from my Social Worker and the Manager. I’ve already had some successes with some of the children I’ve had placed and some not so good, but I remain hopeful and positive. I love my life and enjoy making a positive difference in a young person’s life. Every day is different and when they come into my home the dynamics of the family change. I like to be kept on my toes!

Zoé

an introduction to Orange Grove Fostercare
what is fostering?

In a word, it’s ‘sharing’ – sharing your world with a child who needs a safe and caring environment in which to develop and grow.

Fostering is the generic term used to describe looking after someone else’s child in a registered foster home. Some children are able to return home after a short period of time, other children face an uncertain future and may need a long-term or permanent home or be awaiting adoption.

In all cases Local Authorities prefer vulnerable ‘looked after’ children to live in a foster home rather than a children’s home. Foster care provides the opportunity for a child to be cared for as an individual and develop bonds with adults. It can assist young people to develop into adults who can look after themselves, forge positive relationships and care safely for children of their own when the time arrives. Fostering is one of the most important jobs in the world!

Fostering is regulated by the Children Act 1989, and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. There are National Minimum Standards for Foster Care against which all agencies and Local Authorities are inspected. The law relating to ‘looked after’ children is continually changing, and the role of the foster carer is developing so that foster carers are recognised as part of a professional team working towards improved outcomes for children.

We have the utmost respect for foster carers and will always treat you with the professionalism and warmth that your status commands.

types of fostering?

There are various types of fostering, which although requiring different time commitments still demand the same high level of care and dedication. These are:

- Emergency
- Short-term and Respite
- Bridging
- Permanency
- Long-term
- Teenagers
- Sibling Groups
- Parent and Child
- Children with Disabilities
- Specialist/Solo Placements
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers
who needs fostering?

There are many children and young people who need to stay in a foster home for various lengths of time. Often these children are not in control of the situation and can feel very vulnerable, frightened and confused.

Below we have highlighted some of the reasons that result in children being unable to live with their parent(s) either temporarily or permanently.

- They have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused
- The parent has a severe, chronic mental illness
- They have been seriously neglected
- The child is beyond their parent’s control and may be in trouble with the police, not attending school etc
- Young people may be remanded into care
- A teenage mother may need guidance and support in caring safely for her baby
- The parent abuses drugs/alcohol
- Family relationships have seriously broken down and a young person asks to be looked after away from home
- The parent has rejected the child
- The child has disabilities and the parents need a break

Some children return to live with their birth family, some move on to adoptive parents and some remain with the foster carers until they are old enough to live independently.

who can care?

Foster carers come from all sorts of backgrounds and are as varied as the children they care for. You do not need to be married, own your own home or have children. Whatever your circumstances you could be the right person to make a positive difference to a vulnerable child. You must have a commitment to helping children, a willingness to learn about children’s needs and the stability, energy and humour to provide warmth, flexibility and perseverance.

The children and young people referred to Orange Grove Fostercare come from a wide range of cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds and so we actively seek carers from diverse backgrounds and same sex couples.
everything is open for discussion

Most of our applicants find the process both positive and interesting and you will be supported throughout. Following National Guidelines you will receive 8-10 visits from one of our Social Workers. During the assessment we will be undertaking various checks (including Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS), Local Authority checks and health assessments) and references. You will also be required to undertake training which is great preparation for your fostering vocation.

Upon completion of your assessment, which is usually within 16 weeks of commencement, you will be invited to attend one of our Fostering Panels, along with your Assessing Social Worker.

Subject to approval, the matching process then begins. This is a careful and important task and we work very hard to find the right child for the right family. Throughout the process you can depend upon our support and honest guidance, always.

We strive to be an equal opportunities company and use a non-discriminatory assessment process.

We are particularly keen to receive applications from black/ethnic minority carers and foster carers who will be able to offer a placement to one or more children.
support

Orange Grove Fostercare was founded because we wanted to provide our foster carers with a support service which is second to none – it is all about our partnership, together – you, the children and Orange Grove. We acknowledge from research and from our wealth of experience that the quality, availability, and consistency of support has a direct bearing on successful outcomes in foster care.

We regularly review the support systems provided to our carers and, as we grow, the greater the number of attractive fringe benefits we are able to provide.

You can expect:

- Training in the management of children’s behaviour with regular follow-up training
- Psychological support on a needs-led basis plus additional support groups/surgeries as required
- Out of hours 24-7-365 on-call support service by local social work staff
- 14 days respite (additional support is offered on a needs-led basis)
- Independent Orange Grove children’s helpline for foster children and birth children
- Access to Educational Advisors
- Monthly carer support meetings
- Monthly supervisor visits by a local Social Worker
- A published programme of regular training
- Additional support visits on a needs-led basis by Social Workers or Family Support Workers
- Family Support Workers available for direct one to one work with children and carers
- Minimum of two unannounced visits per annum
- Social Worker attendance at all meetings, conferences, reviews, etc
- One independently-led foster carer review per year

The agency will endeavour, with the help and support of carers, to ensure that all carers have a Back-Up Carer in place to support them or alternatively a respite carer

Activities and events for birth children

Target of 4 regional activities per year for carers and children such as a pantomime, theme park visits, BBQs, activity breaks etc

Carers say

“The high level of support is stunning”
training is a key factor

We produce a carer training plan each year which covers national, regional and local training in the following areas:-

management of children’s behaviour
This includes techniques designed to provide you with the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to deal with children and young people in crisis and to be in control of the situation so as to bring about change and growth.

parent and child placement
This helps you understand the specific needs of both parent and baby when ‘looked after’ together. It helps to develop an awareness of the situations which require intervention by the carer and when it is important to take a step back.

safeguarding
This enables you to gain a deeper understanding on the impact of abuse and to be able to consider the impact this abuse can have on children and young people and the need to report any incidents or disclosures.

bonding and attachment
This teaches the theory relating to bonding and attachment and enables you to identify behaviours that may indicate attachment problems in children. It also explores a number of interventions that can be used to help children with attachment problems to relate better to carers.

local training programme

- PRICE (Protecting Rights in a Caring Environment)
- Dealing with Sexualised Behaviour
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Safer Caring
- Child Development and Health
- Secure ????
- Internet Safety
- Men in Foster Care

- First Aid
- Listening Skills
- Report Writing
- Record Keeping
- Equality & Diversity
- Promoting Education
- Working with Local Authorities
- Legislation I Should Know
- Range of e-learning opportunities
allowances and rewards

Being a foster carer is one of the most important jobs in the world and our foster carers are rewarded financially and supported emotionally.

You will receive payment to cover the costs for caring for a particular child or young person. This recognises the service you provide, your valuable skills as a foster carer and the extra cost related to fostering.

Our allowances are normally revised on the 1st of April each year. Please contact 08458 734455 for further information.

We are here to give you guidance on fees and allowance management too.

“ To see a child with complex health needs so evidently thriving as a direct result of the care she receives is wonderful. The foster carer is doing something that very few carers could, or would choose to do. She has a naturally dignified and child focused approach that is a joy to observe. ”

Independent Reviewing officer
Anne 12, Dean 9 and Natalie 6 are brother and sisters whose parents both have learning difficulties and struggled to cope with the care and control of three lively children. The children had been neglected and had adult responsibilities pushed onto them. Dean attends a special school but Anne and Natalie are much brighter than their parents and this caused a lot of conflict. Their mother became seriously ill and the children became increasingly out of control and neglected. In a foster placement together the children seemed “wild” at first, not understanding any of the rules of family life. They were desperate for adult care and attention and competed ruthlessly against each other. They ate enormously and seemed clumsy and destructive. Once the children had adjusted to life in the foster family and got used to regular meals and to the adults being in control, they really blossomed and became rewarding to care for. They have regular contact with their parents at weekends which is important to them. An attempt will be made to return the children home gradually, but if this fails they will remain fostered long term.

Jess, a 24 year old African woman with learning difficulties and her new born daughter, Marie, were placed with a single female foster carer, Sarah, for a 12 week assessment period. This enabled the mother and daughter to maintain a good bond while being assessed. The real skill in this placement was Sarah’s ability to interact with Jess advising and encouraging her without taking over her role as parent, but at the same time ensuring that Marie’s needs were met and that she was safe at all times. Sarah’s ability to balance all these differing needs and to facilitate contact in the foster home with Jess’s extended family ensured Marie had a warm and safe start to life with her mother.

Jane was a 15 year old who had a close but stormy relationship with her mother and no respect for her step father. She had been running away from home, drinking and getting into fights. She was reasonably bright but was often suspended from school for disruptive behaviour. In foster care, Jane was very challenging at first, daring her carers to control her. However gradually she started to mature, rebuilt her relationship with her mother and took responsibility for controlling her behaviour. Treated as a young adult she eventually responded, moving on to independent accommodation near her mother’s home, aged sixteen and a half.
Many foster carers are now looking after children from abroad who have arrived in this country unaccompanied. Seeing a child develop and integrate into the UK, learn English and gain confidence can be extremely rewarding work. These children are often very motivated to work hard and achieve at school and they value the support and guidance carers give.

fostering an unaccompanied child from abroad

Hong was only 12 when he arrived in this country from Vietnam, unaccompanied, but his journey was likely to have been funded by a gang who planned to use him in drugs and other criminal activities. He was picked up by the police and considered vulnerable so was taken into the care of the Local Authority and placed with an Orange Grove foster carer.

The foster carer quickly realised that the traffickers who originally brought him to this country had identified the area in which he was living and they had attempted to make contact and intimidate him, threatening to abduct him for their own purposes.

Understandably, he was initially very distrustful of all adults and intent on isolating himself from the foster family. The foster carer eventually earned his trust through her nurturing care and over the 3½ years he has been placed, Hong has emerged a confident, capable young man.

With her support, he has protected himself against those intent on exploiting him. He attends school regularly and is studying hard; he has received awards from school, and regularly assists his Local Authority in planning services for other young people in care. He has friends and feels part of his community. His carer is very proud of him, and she feels she has made a real difference to his life.
frequently asked questions

what skills do I need to become a foster carer?
Plenty of patience, enthusiasm, often humour and always kindness. It helps to have a flexible approach to life as there is never a dull moment and you must be able to demonstrate an understanding of the complex needs of children.

can I earn a living as a foster carer?
Yes, absolutely. Being a foster carer is one of the most important jobs in the world and our foster carers are rewarded financially and supported emotionally. Please contact us for up-to-date fees and allowance information.

will I have to leave my employment to become a foster carer?
Not always. As an Orange Grove foster carer you will need to ensure that you are able to meet the needs of a foster child first and foremost. This may not always result in you having to leave your employment, it depends on individual and family circumstances.

what about the physical space in my home?
A foster child must have their own bedroom and space within the home. We would not accept a birth child being made to give up their own bedroom to accommodate a foster child.

am I too old to foster?
We welcome applications from all age groups. Orange Grove does not see being older as a restriction to fostering but it may prevent you from taking some long term placements. Consideration is given to health, well-being and outlook, not age.

can same sex couples foster?
Yes. We consider all applications on suitability to be foster carers rather than sexual orientation.

I’m a single parent, can I still be a foster carer?
Of course. Single carers are often needed, the important point is that you have a good support network around you.
how will we be assessed as prospective foster carers and how long will it take?

We appoint an Assessing Social Worker to carry out an assessment on your suitability to foster which will include references and checks. Don’t worry, it’s not as tedious as it sounds and our social workers are used to answering lots of questions which you’ll no doubt have. The process can take up to four months depending on the family being assessed.

will I receive training?

Yes. We will invite you to attend the ‘Skills to Foster’ preparation training as part of your assessment process which most of our prospective carers thoroughly enjoy. Once you are approved as an Orange Grove foster carer you will join the annual training programme which always contains new information and methods for newbie and seasoned foster carers alike. It’s a great time to network and swap ideas.

what support will I receive?

We have dedicated, locally based staff who will support you all the way. It is the Orange Grove support package that sets us apart from other independent agencies and local authorities. We are extremely proud of this and we are deeply committed to both you as the foster carer and of course our foster children.

We believe in an open and honest partnership, we work tirelessly to support you both financially and emotionally and we truly believe, with your help, we can make a positive, never forgotten difference to children’s lives.

we have our own children, can we still foster?

Definitely – you’ll be well placed to understand children’s needs. We always take your own children’s needs into account during the assessment process and will consider the impact on them when placing foster children in your family. We have lots of great activities just for birth children which go down a treat.
how much time will fostering take?

Becoming a foster carer is a full-time commitment however there are differing types of fostering ranging from a few days to permanency. The crucial aspect of fostering is to find the right type of fostering that fits around you and your family’s needs. If you want to help support a child and have the time and the ability to do so, these are the most important factors in assessing your competency as an Orange Grove foster carer.

**long-term**

There are families where, for whatever reason, the parents are unable to look after their own child at all. In these circumstances the child will need a long-term foster home where he/she can grow up in the knowledge that they have a secure home.

**emergency or short-term**

These placements vary in time from a single overnight stay to months. These children usually come into the care of Local Authorities as a result of illness within the family or abuse at home. As an Orange Grove foster carer part of your role will be helping the child understand what is happening to them and reassuring them.

**respite placements/children with disabilities**

We have many carers who are able to offer respite placements to children and young people on a short term basis. This could be for a few weeks, weekend or on a day basis. Respite care can provide temporary care for a child or young person with a disability giving a break to those who normally care for them. It also gives the children a chance to develop new friendships and enjoy new experiences.
what kinds of fostering are there?

Orange Grove Fostercare has an urgent need for foster carers of children of all ages but specifically teenagers and sibling groups. There is a national shortage of foster carers for these children and priority will be given to potential carers who express an interest in meeting the needs of these children.

Listed below are several types of foster care in order of need.

- **Teenagers**
- **Sibling Groups**
- **Parent and Baby**
- **Special Needs**
  - If you are approved as a Special Needs foster carer you may find yourself working with specialist educational or medical staff
- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People**
  - Some foster carers are able to accept young people who are deemed to be unaccompanied asylum seekers, where their residency status within the UK is yet to be determined. We are able to provide additional training.

- **Solo Placements**
  - We train specific foster carers who are available to take young people whose needs are particularly complex, thus requiring a higher level of support and supervision. This precludes the placement of any other young person within the fostering household. If requested, and by arrangement with the placing authority, additional support services can be made available. These young people can not be placed in a foster home with any other children, and often the foster carer has special skills and will receive specific training for solo placements.
what are foster carers required to do?

Listed below are tasks that a foster carer is expected to achieve.

- To provide safe, warm, nurturing care
- To provide appropriate food, clothing and standards of hygiene
- To encourage school attendance and achievement through support at home
- To promote contact with the child’s own family (unless contact is forbidden) and welcome family visits if requested by the Local Authority
- To ensure children receive good health care and attend appointments for medical, dental and optical treatment as well as therapy etc
- To set appropriate boundaries on behaviour and encourage self control
- To use praise and encouragement to promote improvements in behaviour and self esteem
- To provide opportunities for children to pursue hobbies and learn new skills
- To attend meetings to plan for the child, review progress etc
- To ensure individual time is available for children to talk about their problems and worries
- To keep accurate written records on all aspects of the child’s life in the foster home
- To attend support groups and on-going training to develop fostering skills
- To liaise closely with the child’s Social Worker; ensuring information is passed on
- To prepare children to move on from the foster home, whether they return to their own family, are placed in a permanent substitute family or live independently as a young adult.

Not surprisingly, the skills needed to become a foster carer are varied and special with each day bringing new challenges and rewards.

It’s all worth it.
We appreciate that ‘assessment’ is a daunting word. This is why we promise to work through every part of the application process with you.

Your assessment is not an academic test, it is a necessary and important part of your application process to assess whether you are a suitable and safe person to provide a foster home for vulnerable children.

In the first instance, please call us for an informal chat. We are here to set you on the right path towards changing a young person’s life.

I first came into care eight months ago. It was because I was having trouble with everything. When I came to Deb’s I felt really scared and I felt intimidated. During the last eight months I have started the Pupil Referral Unit and college and I am doing really well. I think that’s because I am feeling more confident and I have the support of Deb and my Mum. I had to be interviewed by the ‘blues and twos’ because I had done a few things wrong. I took Deb’s advice and I took responsibility for my actions and everything’s sorted. They called this ‘Operation Clean Slate’. It’s a beast! I’m now feeling confident enough to go to mainstream school and tackle my GCSEs. I’ve also joined Karate and carried on with Cadets. I feel that the pressures are off because I never get nagged about my room and other small issues and I can concentrate on the big issues. All in all my life in care has turned out alright.

Carl
the assessment process

An Orange Grove social worker will visit you regularly over a few months to build a picture of the special skills you and your family could bring to fostering a child.

The assessment process is thorough to prepare you for the challenges and rewards that fostering brings. This will help us to decide which sort of child or young person would be best suited to your family.

A number of checks will be undertaken as part of our assessment.

As a prospective Orange Grove foster carer we’ll let you know what fostering with us would involve. Fostering will also affect your family and friends and the assessment process will help you to give this some thought. The process will also help us to decide which children/young person to ask you to foster once you have been approved.
the pathway to becoming a foster carer

1) You will be contacted by our friendly foster care Enquiry Officer on 08455 734455

2) An information pack telling you more about fostering will be sent out to you

3) An office local to you will contact you to make an appointment to come and see you in your home

4) After your home visit your Assessing Social Worker is allocated to you and your assessments begin. Don’t worry we are here to help you.

5) You attend Skills to Fostering training which covers
   - What Foster Care Involves
   - Safe Care
   - Working in Partnership
   - Identity
   - Attachment/Development
   - Understanding Behaviour
   - Moving On

6) You complete your assessments which are signed off by all parties

7) You attend a Fostering Panel

8) You are approved - Welcome to the Orange Grove family!

Approved

After approval, you will receive further information, training opportunities and an introduction to your Supervising Social Worker.

- Following this a child or young person could be placed with you if a suitable match is identified

- Your approval is reviewed annually or when there is any change in your circumstances.

The assessment process can take up to four months in total. All members of your household will be involved in the assessment process, including any children who live with you.
Orange Grove Fostercare is a leading national Independent Fostering Agency and we are recognised by very many local authorities as providing excellent family placements. We believe our success is based on a complete commitment to children and foster carers and the value we place upon working in partnership with you.

how do I find out more?

These questions and answers are just the tip of the iceberg! If you have any other questions about fostering please don’t hesitate to contact us.

We are here to help you help vulnerable children.

local offices national support

national enquiry telephone number

08458 734455

foster4us@orangegrovefostercare.co.uk

www.orangegrovefostercare.co.uk