

## **Applying to become a Foster Carer – Guidance for Applicants**

**This is the usual process of assessment and approval, which we aim to have completed in 6 months**

1. You contact Aspire Foster Care to register your interest in fostering. We will have a brief discussion, take down some basic information and if you wish, send you further information about the agency.
2. A social worker will then visit you to discuss fostering in more detail, and following this a decision will be made whether or not to proceed to the formal application stage. We will inform you in writing of the decision.
3. If you then decide to proceed with your application, you will be asked to complete an initial application form and you will be invited to attend training sessions.
4. A social worker will meet with you regularly to discuss what fostering entails and the competencies (skills) and qualities required. Together you will plan what information you will need to collect to show what you can offer.
5. S/he will discuss how the assessment is going and what information is still needed.
6. Police checks and checks with other agencies are carried out. Certain, specific information will be required (for example, a birth certificate or a passport as proof of your identity), and utility bills.
7. A number of references are taken up including personal, (work, if applicable), and school, (if you have school age children). Personal referees are interviewed.
8. You will have to undergo a medical examination and the results will shown to AFC's Fostering Panel's medical advisor for comments.
9. Your social worker will then write a report, pulling together all the information collected during the assessment process. The report will outline your skills, training needs and areas of vulnerability. S/he will discuss with you and then recommend the number and age of children you could foster.
10. You will see the report and you will have the opportunity to comment on it in writing.
11. The report is presented to AFC's Fostering Panel by your social worker. You may attend if you wish. If you do choose to attend, you will be invited into the meeting after your social worker has presented the report in order to ask, or respond to any questions.
12. Following the panel meeting, you will be informed of the decision in writing.
13. If you are approved, your social worker will guide you through the next steps.

14. If it is decided that you should not be approved, you will be given written notice of the decision, the reasons for the decision, and you will be invited to submit any written representations within 28 days of the date of the notice.
15. AFC's Fostering Panel will meet to consider the written representations. You will be informed of the decision in writing.

### **The home based assessment**

Your social worker will meet with you regularly over several months to talk through what fostering entails. During the process, you will need to provide specific information about yourself, and you will be asked to participate in the assessment by producing examples of the skills, experience or knowledge that you have. Your social worker will have to write a report, which will give an accurate picture of you and your family. It will also describe what you can offer children who are fostered.

In order to foster you will need to show that you are able to:

- 1. Care for children and young people;**
- 2. Provide a safe and caring environment;**
- 3. Work as part of a team; and**
- 4. Think about your own personal development.**

These are broad headings, which encompass 14 competencies. Throughout the assessment process, your social worker will discuss with you how you can provide 'evidences', or examples of your skills and knowledge. These 'evidences' will be kept by you in a portfolio and will form part of your assessment report.

Evidences can take many forms and can include:

- Talking - you will need to discuss personal aspects of you life and your views, experiences etc can be presented as evidences.
- Observation (e.g. allowing your social worker to observe you with children).
- Letters, phone calls or an interview with other people.
- Evidence obtained through record keeping, certificates or other documentation.
- Through the discussion during training

One piece of 'evidence' may cover various competencies. Do not to worry about the examples as your social worker will take you through the process.

**The 14 competencies are:**

### **1 Caring for children and young people**

- 1.1 An ability to provide a good standard of care to other people's children which promotes healthy emotional, physical and sexual development as well as their health and educational achievement.
- 1.2 An ability to work closely with children's families, and others who are important to the child.
- 1.3 An ability to set appropriate boundaries, and manage children's behaviour within these, without the use of physical or inappropriate punishment.
- 1.4 Knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen and communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding.

### **2 Providing a safe and caring environment**

- 2.1 An ability to ensure that children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.
- 2.2 An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse, and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened.

### **3 Working as part of a team**

- 3.1 An ability to work with other professional people and contribute to the department's planning for the child/young person.
- 3.2 An ability to communicate effectively.
- 3.3 An ability to keep information confidential.
- 3.4 An ability to promote equality, diversity and rights of individuals and groups within society.

### **4 Your own development**

- 4.1 An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected you and your family, and the impact fostering is likely to have on you all.
- 4.2 An ability to have people and links within the community, which provide support.
- 4.3 An ability to use training opportunities and to improve your skills.
- 4.4 An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.

**You will not be expected to be equally able in every area.** Your social worker will help you recognize your skills and will identify areas where you will need help to develop the necessary skills. Aspire Foster Care offers on-going training to all foster carers and this includes the opportunity to study for an NVQ Level 3 in "Caring for Children and Young People".