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YOU COULD FOSTER



Information for Prospective Foster Carers

Referral and Matching

"For social workers the process of child placement is becoming more complex, demanding not only the balancing of conflicting rights and wishes but also a creativity in developing new types of care which can respond to some very individual and distinct types of need"

*Older Children in Care
- John Triseliotis*

"... The objective of these programmes was - by treating the young people as normal and capable of running their own lives - to maximise their strengths and deal with their weaknesses, whilst at the same time their environment was changed to facilitate this process".

*Theoretical Background and the Evaluation Of Teenage Fostering
- Nancy Hazel*

JMT Fostering is committed to providing a high quality professional fostering service to children and young people looked after by local authorities whose needs will be met best by placement within a family.

We aim to work always within a child-centred and anti-discriminatory framework to serve the best interests of children and young people.

The criteria for referral to JMT Fostering are;

- The child or young person is being looked after by a local authority
- It is likely that the child or young person's needs will best be met by placement with foster carers

Careful matching between the children or young person and foster carers is crucial to the viability of the placement. Our matching considerations are:

- A comprehensive assessment of the needs of the child or young person, including considerations of racial, religious, linguistic and cultural identity
- Clear aims for the placement and identification of the tasks involved
- The particular skills and expertise of the foster carer and an assessment of his/her ability to meet the two previous criteria
- Geographical location, where appropriate
- The availability and accessibility of appropriate education provision and community supports

At all stages of the process we undertake to work in as open and flexible manner as possible, in close collaboration with the placing authority to avoid both undue haste and unnecessary delays.

Education



“Children who are looked after should have the same opportunities as all other children for education, including further and higher education, and access to other opportunities for development. They should also, where necessary, receive additional help, encouragement and support to address special needs or compensate for previous deprivation or disadvantages”.

- The Children (Scotland) Act, 1995 Guidance

JMT Fostering works closely with placing authorities to ensure that children and young people receive all possible support to achieve their full educational potential.

Sometimes, it is possible for a young person to continue at his or her current school. In many cases the most suitable provision will be a school in the locality of the foster carer's home, and we encourage our carers to promote close links and working relationships with local schools and other educational support services.

We recognise that some young people find it difficult to sustain a place in mainstream education. If it becomes clear that the local school is unable to meet the needs of the young person in placement, or that the placement is being jeopardised by inappropriate education provision, then JMT Fostering will work with the placing authority to identify suitable supports or alternative provision as may be appropriate.

Thank you for expressing an interest in JMT Fostering,

As you will appreciate, fostering children and young people is a complex and sometimes very difficult task and we therefore need people of the highest calibre to do this work. If successful, you will be well rewarded and supported by qualified staff at JMT.

There is still some way to go, however, before you decide if you want to join us, so this information has been collated for your benefit before our Service Manager comes to see you.

Our Service to Children and Young People...

Children and young people placed with JMT foster carers have the opportunity to live in a safe, structured and supportive family setting. Our foster carers are trained and supported to a high standard. They are able to offer:

- knowledge and understanding of child development, including the effects of abuse.
- assessment skills.
- ability to understand and work with a wide range of behavioural problems.
- experience of working with a range of children and their families.
- sensitivity to, and the ability to communicate with, parents who may be distressed or angry.
- commitment to helping children and young people maintain contact with their family of origin when appropriate.
- other relevant skills such as report writing; participation in planning meetings, reviews and court work.

"We need to select families for these children who are capable of providing optimum environments for nurture and for positive interactions combined with reasonable limits"

*Fitting the Pieces Together
- Vera Fahlberg*

The JMT Fostering Panel

"Foster care frequently calls for weighing of complex issues to ensure that the child's interests are best served and the Panel will have the required expertise to consider these decisions".

*The Children (Scotland) Act, 1995 Guidance
- HMSO*

In accordance with the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, JMT Fostering has appointed a fostering panel to consider and recommend to the agency the approval of foster carers, and if recommending approval, the terms under which such approval should be granted. Approval may be for any child, certain categories of children, or for a specific child or children.

The foster care panel also considers all first reviews of approved foster carers, any subsequent review where a significant amendment to the terms of approval is being proposed, or where termination of approval is being considered.

The foster care panel comprises up to 10 members, appointed by the agency, whose individual and collective qualifications and experience ensure that the panel is able to discharge its functions effectively. Members are appointed for 3 years, with the option to renew membership for a further three by mutual agreement.

On joining the panel, members are provided with written terms of appointment and sign a confidentiality agreement. Initial training and induction is provided for new members, and ongoing training needs are identified by the chair of the panel in consultation with the JMT Service Manager. The JMT Fostering Service Manager attends the panel when required in an advisory capacity.

We consider it important that prospective foster carers take an active role in their own assessment process. They are encouraged to contribute to the Form F report and are invited to attend the panel when their application is being considered.

Foster care panel meetings are held monthly at Alba Pavilions, Livingston. Meetings are minuted, and all recommendations made by the panel are subsequently considered by the Agency Decision Maker.

Our Service to Local Authorities...

"Fostering is a complex task. The changing demands of children and families, the impact of local government re-organisation and the challenge of implementing new legislation mean that workers and managers need to rethink ideas constantly".

*Valuing Children. Valuing Carers
- The Fostering Network*

The advantages of looking after children in the community are now well established, but skilled foster carers are a scarce resource.

JMT Fostering is primarily concerned with providing specialised foster placements as a planned alternative to, or following, residential care. We are happy to discuss with individual authorities how we may help them meet specific needs, such as placements for sibling groups, children with disabilities, mother and baby placements and children who present challenging behaviour.

Our foster carers are highly trained, skilled and supported. Working together with the child's own social worker, we will contribute to the assessment of the child or young person, assist in the formulation and implementation of individual care plans, work to facilitate contact with the child or young person's family and other significant people, and provide regular written reports to the placing agency.

Placing authorities are invited to contribute to reviews of foster carers. We also welcome comments on any other aspect of our service.



JMT Fostering puts particular emphasis on the concept and practice of safe caring

- to keep the foster child safe from abuse by adults.
- to keep children in the foster home safe from abuse by other children in the household.
- to keep members of the foster family safe from false allegations of abuse.

JMT Fostering is committed to working to promote the highest standards of care at all times.

Our Service to Foster Carers...

"The clearest way agencies can support foster carers is by giving them a clear sense of their status as workers for the agency".

*Support to Foster Carers
- The Fostering Network*

The demands made upon foster carers have escalated over the last decade. Children and young people with complex legal and family situations are placed with foster carers with many, if not all of them, bringing challenging and difficult behaviour because of their troubled history.

Foster carers need to develop a wide range of skills to meet the increasing demands made upon them by agencies and by the children in their care.

JMT Fostering is committed to recruiting and retaining a team of skilled, dedicated foster carers. We believe that the best way to achieve this is to offer comprehensive assessment, initial and ongoing training programmes, high levels of individual and group support and financial recognition appropriate to the task.

Foster carers are valued members of the team, afforded the status and respect commensurate with their responsibilities.



Specifically, we offer foster carers:

- A comprehensive assessment, preparation and initial training programme.
- Careful matching of foster carers and children/young people.
- Individual support from experienced social workers.
- A 24-hour emergency telephone service.
- Group support.
- Access to multi-disciplinary supports.
- Inbuilt and emergency short break care, if required.
- Appropriate education provision for the children and young people in their care.
- Ongoing training for foster carers to build on existing skills and develop new ones.
- Individual membership of The Fostering Network.
- A fee commensurate with their responsibilities, in addition to the payment of a fostering allowance.
- The opportunity to be an integral member of the care team.
- The opportunity to contribute to the future development of the service.