

Your guide to our
fostering services



Welcome to Aspris Fostering Services

Whether you're new to fostering or looking to switch provider, you might be feeling confused about the whole process but don't worry! This guide is here to give you all the answers you need, from what's involved in fostering with us, to who does what and how long it takes. We want to make sure you have all the information you need when you decide it's time to help make a difference to a child's life – let's get started!

Fostering a child is such an incredible job to take on. Foster parents/carers can be a rock for children, providing stability and emotional support during what can be an extremely distressing time. It's absolutely crucial that every child has a safe and loving home, especially considering many of these children have experienced the complete opposite. Regardless of the reason, fostering offers these children a secure and caring environment. But it's so much more than just providing shelter, you have the opportunity to completely transform a child's life for the better.

Aspris Fostering Services provides caring and stable foster families for children and young people up to the age of 18 years. As a foster carer with us, you will be part of a small, well-established fostering agency that sits within a large specialist children's services organisation. You will benefit from access to professional experts from across the educational and social care sector, whilst being supported by a small team of dedicated and experienced individuals.

We provide foster families for local children throughout the West Midlands and as such, we see requests from the West Midlands Local Authorities Children's Social Services looking to place a child with a foster family. We are committed to ensuring children and young people live in a safe and comfortable environment, because of this we also offer parent and child placements, and foster families for siblings.

Whether you are new to fostering or an experienced carer, we will encourage you to feel part of our dedicated team. In return, we offer a substantial rewards package and other useful benefits to ensure that you flourish as part of a friendly, enthusiastic and dynamic team.



“Aspris has been absolutely amazing and have helped me in ways I don't think they'll ever understand.”

Foster carer



The role of a foster parent/carers

In the role of a foster parent/carers, you will provide nourishment, support the wellbeing of the child or young person, foster their growth and development, and offer guidance and a secure base to enable any child to feel safe. However, it is important to recognise that there are distinct differences when parenting a child in foster care compared to a biological child. These disparities need to be understood and considered throughout the foster parenting journey.

Training

As a foster parent, your learning continues to grow with you along your journey, which is an incredible opportunity. Each new child you care for will have different needs, so we offer ongoing training and continued advice and support.

Education

A key responsibility of any foster parent is ensuring the children in your care attend school and that you are an advocate for their learning and education. When a child or young person has moved homes, keeping the routine and structure of school is often important.

Contact with the birth family

Taking foster children to visit family might be with a variety of family members such as parents, grandparents and siblings. It might be a supervised visit or very informal depending on the family circumstances. Contact with family can be an emotional experience for children and any child you look after will need your support, understanding and empathy.



“Aspris is absolutely brilliant! If we have a problem, situation or any questions that we need to ask, they are there 24/7.”

Foster carer



Comprehensive training and ongoing support

Our knowledge and experience has shown that high levels of effective support and comprehensive training for foster carers provides stability and positive outcomes for the children and young people in our care.

Comprehensive training

- Ongoing and regular professional development
- Face-to-face, group and online training
- External training opportunities including NVQ accreditation
- Access to Aspris Group training and development

High levels of support

- Access to a 24/7, out-of-hours support service from our team of supervising social workers
- Psychological services and support for children and our foster carers
- Your own Aspris Fostering Services social worker, whose role is to provide you with support and guidance at all times
- Access for our children to a fostering support worker, who works in partnership with carers and other professionals
- Representation at all Children in Care reviews
- Therapeutic parenting training from an experienced child psychologist
- Regular support group meetings and foster carer coffee mornings
- Mentoring of new foster carers by experienced carers

Social support activities

- Invitations to various social events
- Summer activity programme
- Residential ‘preparing for independence’ weekends for our young adults
- Celebration of key events and festivals

Competitive benefits

- A welcome bonus of £2,000 upon approval
- Weekly payments
- Paid holiday allowance
- Generous tax allowances
- Paid membership of Foster Talk
- Paid respite care up to a maximum of 21 days per year
- Access to Blue Light Card rewards
- Refer a friend bonus scheme

Can I become an Aspris foster parent/carer?

To become a foster carer with us, you don't need any formal qualifications or experience. When joining us, you will receive thorough training and an induction into Aspris but some skills can't be taught and you will bring with you various life skills. These include:

- The time and energy to invest in a child or young person
- The ability to communicate effectively, not only with children and young people but also with social workers, the child's families and others concerned with the wellbeing of the child or young person
- The ability to be flexible and non-judgemental, as well as being patient and understanding
- A spare bedroom/s for your foster child
- A valid driving licence and access to a car
- Access to a computer and the internet
- A sense of humour and dedication to bringing joy to the lives of children and young people

You can apply to be a foster carer regardless of your marital status, sexuality or residential status. Foster carers come from diverse backgrounds, which reflect our children and young people who are in need of stable and caring home environments.



“You're never doing any part of the journey on your own. You've always got somebody to talk to at Aspris.”

Foster carer



How do I apply to become an Aspris foster parent/carer?

Get in touch

The first step is to enquire about joining our services by either telephone or email. It might be that you'd prefer an informal conversation first, which we are happy to do so and answer any questions you might have at this stage. After this initial contact, we can then support you through the next steps where we will arrange a home visit to find out a little more about you.

After we have met with you, you'll then need to complete an application form and return it to us. Please note, enhanced criminal record and medical checks will be undertaken at this stage. Once this has been completed, your home study assessment (Form F) will begin and we will then request references.

After a successful application and following completion of your checks, you will be enrolled onto our Skills to Foster course to begin your training and induction with Aspris.

What happens during the assessment process?

All foster carers must be assessed by a specialist social worker. Once the assessment has been carried out successfully, both the foster carer and the social worker will attend an independent fostering panel to be officially approved as a professional foster carer.

At the meeting, they will look through your Form F to discuss the type of fostering placement that's right for you and make recommendations about your suitability to be approved as a foster parent. Those who are new to fostering may think the fostering panel sounds intimidating however, most people find this both a positive and rewarding experience.

How long will the assessment process take?

It usually takes around four to six months to complete your fostering assessment. This gives you plenty of time to think things through and not rush into any decisions. We'll work at your speed, so there's no need to hurry. Our goal is to make sure that by the end of the assessment, all the important aspects of why you want to foster and why you're a great fit have been showcased. Whilst this process can take around four to six months, we will aim for the assessment to be completed sooner if possible.

Once you're approved as a foster carer, we'll begin the process of finding the perfect child or young person for you. At Aspris Fostering Services, we are keen to involve foster carers in their placement matching so you'll have the final say when it comes to welcoming a child into your home.

Find out **more**

Whether you're a new foster carer or looking to switch provider, please contact us today to find out more about Aspris Fostering Services and what sets us apart from other agencies.

Email: fostering@aspriscs.co.uk

Call: 01684 560 333

'Foster carers speak positively about the support provided to the children by the agency staff.'

Ofsted

'Staff ensure that they make child-centred decisions when matching children with their foster carers. For example, specific training is offered to foster carers. This means that they are confident in meeting children's needs and feel supported by the agency.'

Ofsted

'The achievements of the children and foster carers are recognised and celebrated.'

Ofsted