St Andrew's Children's Society

ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

Thinking of Foster Care?

St Andrew's Children's Society is a voluntary adoption and foster care agency with bases in Edinburgh and Aberdeen

St Andrew's Children's Society is an adoption and foster care agency established in Edinburgh in 1922. Successfully opening our Aberdeen office in 2013, we are preparing and supporting adoptive and foster care families throughout the central belt and north-east of Scotland.

Why choose to adopt with St Andrew's Children's Society?

When you choose to foster with us:

- You will receive a warm, positive and speedy response to your initial enquiry.
- You will have experienced social workers supporting and guiding you all the way through the process of being prepared, assessed and approved as a foster carer.
- We will then find the right child for you, not just by looking in one local authority area, but by searching across the whole of Scotland.
- We offer short term, long term and short break (also known as respite) foster care.
- We are particularly looking for people who will make a long-term or permanent commitment to children who desperately need to feel they belong to a family that loves and cares for them.
- You will receive the support you need to be the best foster carer you can be for the child in your care. Our commitment to you is long term and you will never feel alone fostering with us.
- You will receive financial support* to meet the costs of day-to-day care of a child (foster care allowance), but you will also receive a fee that is a direct monthly payment to you as a reward for the huge effort you will put in to make a child feel safe, loved and ready to flourish in the world.
- The average timescale from enquiry to approval is only 6 months.

* The level of fees offered can vary, so please speak to us.

The children

The children that we place in foster care are vulnerable. They are already in the care of their local authority because they will have experienced some level of trauma and/or abuse. We place boys and girls, sibling groups and children of various ages, from 0-18 years. **We particularly seek foster carers for sibling groups and older children (7+) who need a permanent home away from their birth family.**

Concurrent Care

We are currently running a scheme in West Lothian called Concurrent Care, to recruit carers for a small number of very young children who are at high risk of not being able to return to their birth families after birth. Concurrent carers need to be willing to have a baby or very young child placed with them initially on a fostering basis, while a concentrated effort is made to return the child to the birth parents. This involves a high level of contact with the birth family. Should the time limited assessment show that the child cannot return to the birth family, the child will be adopted by their concurrent carers. This means that the child experiences very little disruption to their care. This may not suit most people who want to consider fostering but if you think you could ultimately make the commitment to adopt a child in your care if that is what is needed then we are happy to talk further to you about this option.

If this interests you, please mention this on your enquiry form and, when a social worker visits you, they can tell you more. Potential concurrent carers should live within easy reach of West Lothian.

Who can foster with St Andrew's Children's Society?

- Single people or couples who are over 25 years of age. There is no legal upper age limit, but we look at the characteristics for a child that might best suit older applicants.
- Couples who have been co-habiting for a minimum of two years, though we expect couples to have been together longer.
- Single people and couples with and without children. If you do have children we would take their needs into account first before helping you decide if starting the foster carer process is right for your family.
- LGBT+ single people and couples.
- Single people and couples from all ethnic backgrounds.
- Single people and couples from all religious denominations or none.
- Single people and couples in good physical and mental health. If you are unsure whether you would meet this criteria, please contact us and our Duty Social Worker will be happy to explore this further with you.
- Children under 5 years of age will only be placed in non-smoking and non-vaping households.
- Some Local Authorities do not place children of any age in smoking/vaping households.
- To be considered as a non-smoker/non-vaper an applicant has to not have smoked/vaped for at least 12 months.
- A spare bedroom is required.
- You must live within a 60 mile radius of either Edinburgh or Aberdeen.

Financial support offered to foster carers by St Andrew's Children's Society

The level of fees offered can vary, so please speak to us, as we realise this is a very important aspect of foster care. Fees are made up of a **Foster Care Fee** and a **Foster Care Allowance** which increases for children over 16 years of age.

Birthday Allowance – Carers will be paid the equivalent of one week fostering allowance as the birthday allowance for the year.

Christmas/Religious Festivals Allowance – Carers will be paid the equivalent of one week fostering allowance in November as the Christmas/Religious Festival allowance for the year.

Holiday Allowance – Carers will be paid the equivalent of two weeks fostering allowance in June, as the Holiday Allowance for the year.

St Andrew's Children's Society's support

We are committed to offering our foster carers ongoing support, both formal and informal. Included in the support we offer is:

- Support groups for foster carers
- Support groups for children
- Liaison with other agencies, including schools
- SafeBase Parenting Programme
- Ongoing training opportunities
- Summer picnic and story telling events (under 12yrs)
- Christmas party (under 12yrs)

Our staff and agency are committed to forming positive and trusting relationships with all our foster carers. Your social worker will help draw up an Individual Placement Agreement between the agency, the local authority that placed the child, and yourself. This will focus on detailing the needs of the child and on the skills you will need to meet these needs as fully as possible. It will also outline the support you should expect from your own social worker and the local authority social worker responsible for the child.

Foster Carer Approval Process

Initial Visit

The social worker will tell you about foster care, the preparation and assessment process, the checks we carry out and about the agency.

You should be as honest as possible with us at this point so that we can be clear with you about what the challenges will be. You will also hear about the kinds of children who need foster care homes and we will ask you about your motivation and expectations

Preparation Group

Our job is to give you a lot of information about foster care, including the sorts of children available, who have all come through the care system.

You have a crucial role to play at this time. You are given a chance to take a very honest look at what you want out of fostering and what you can offer a child waiting to be fostered (all of whom have experienced loss, trauma and/or abuse).

Homestudy

This is the assessment process to become a foster carer and takes around 6 months to complete.

The homestudy looks at: your personal history, relationships, support network, motivation to foster, parenting capacity, your understanding of foster care, accommodation, finances and your area. It includes a police check, local authority checks, medicals and references from employers and friends.

Approval Panel

The report from your homestudy goes to the agency's independent panel for consideration.

The panel will meet with you and ask you questions. This lasts about 30 minutes. They make a recommendation regarding approval. The Agency Decision Maker then makes a decision based on your report, the information received at panel and the panel's recommendation.

Find a Child

Looking for the right child for you to foster.

Unlike local authority foster carer services we do not confine our search for the child for you to one local authority area. We will search across Scotland to get the right child that best suits your family and what you offer.

Linking & Matching

When a potential match has been found, social workers involved will attend a Linking Meeting to explore the potential match and what support may be needed.

A recommendation is made about the suitability of the match. If this is positive you will have a series of introductory meetings with the child before the decision is made to move the child into your home.

Legal Context

Children who are in foster care are legally protected and safeguarded by the local authority that places them with you.

The legal context for children can vary depending on their needs and full information will be given to you when there is potential for a child to move into your home.

Foster Care: Initial Enquiry Form

Applicant Information

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Full Name		
Address		
City		
Postcode		
Telephone Number		
Email		
Date of Birth		
Ethnicity		
Religion or Religious Status		
Nationality		
Occupation		
Date of Marriage/Civil Partnership [if applicable]		
Length of Relationship [if applicable]		

Accommodation

Brief description of accommodation	
Spare room available for child/ren [please circle]	Y / N

Background Information

Please specify particulars of children by birth, adoption or previous marriages and any other member of your household:

Age	**Relationship**	**Placement Date** [if applicable]	**Adoption Date** [if applicable]

Background Information (continued)

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Have you been a carer for another fostering agency?	Y / N	Y / N
If Yes: Please state agency and reason for leaving.		

Medical Information

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Do you smoke? [please circle]	Y / N	Y / N
If Yes:	Please state duration and number of cigarettes per day.	Please state duration and number of cigarettes per day.
	Y / N Please also state if you have recently stopped smoking and for how long.	Y / N Please also state if you have recently stopped smoking and for how long.
Do you vape? [please circle]	Y / N	Y / N
	Y / N Please also state if you have recently stopped vaping and for how long.	Y / N Please also state if you have recently stopped vaping and for how long.
Please state any medical conditions (physical or mental health) which are current or you have previously experienced		

Foster Care Interests

Do you have interest in permanent foster care of?

- ☐ Pre-school
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 10+ years
- ☐ Additional needs
- ☐ Siblings

03/2024

If there is any other information you would like to share, please put it on a separate piece of paper and include it with your form submission.

Date completed:

Please complete the details and return the form to:

St Andrew's Children's Society
7 John's Place
Leith
Edinburgh EH6 7EL

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