



**Supporting you to be
Part of a Child's
Journey**



**Here is your guide to
Fostering with Amicus**



Amicus
FOSTER CARE

Contents

1 Fostering with Amicus

- 1 Who are Amicus?
- 2 Why should I foster with Amicus?
- 3 P.A.C.E
- 4 Training and Activities
- 5-7 Fees & Allowances

2 About Fostering

- 8 What is Fostering?
- 9 Who can Foster?
- 10-11 The types of Fostering
- 12 How does Fostering affect my Family?
- 13-15 How does the Application and Assessment process work?

3 More information

- 16-17 Frequently Asked Questions
- 18 Contact Details

0117 955 5039

enquiries@amicusfostercare.com

www.amicusfostercare.com

Who are Amicus?

Amicus Foster Care was setup in 2009 by a small, diverse team and have been Ofsted rated 'Outstanding' in all of our inspections. We support families to care for Children and Young People who are looked after by Local Authorities. Our ethos is to remain small, friendly and responsive while focusing on a personalised, 'family-feeling' approach to fostering. We believe success is measured by the outcomes for our children and young people and the support and celebration of our amazing foster families.

If you are passionate about making a difference for children, and have the energy and space in your life, we would like to talk to you. When joining the Amicus Foster Care team, your experience, skills and approach to life is more important to us than your age, marital status or sexuality.

"Amicus is a small fostering company, like a family they are all about the children we care for and they offer amazing support"

Amicus Foster Carer



We believe every child should have the right to experience a childhood in a family setting

“We have enjoyed being foster carers over the last few years to the two sisters who live with us. It is always a joy to see their bond growing as we encourage them to play together. Sometimes it can be challenging due to their differing needs, but it is always rewarding. It is thought that sibling relationships can be one of the most important that we can have in our lifetime, emotionally and socially. It is an honour to support them as they both grow to know one another and their wider family.”

Foster Carer



- Amicus offers a competitive professional fees & allowances.
- You will receive 21 nights paid short breaks, pro-rata, per year.
- Amicus carers receive an annual summer holiday bonus.
- As a carer you will receive around the clock access to a local and known member of our team.
- Amicus ensure the best possible supervision & support from your allocated Amicus Social Worker.
- Monthly support group meetings will be provided, along with access to further support group sessions if you require them.
- Amicus provide individual access to experienced, qualified therapists using dyadic developmental psychotherapy working with P.A.C.E (**Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity & Empathy**).
- Unlimited educational advice to support foster carers in working with schools & promoting children and young people's educational needs.
- Comprehensive post-approval training & development programme including access to the TSD (Training, support and development standards).
- Amicus offer activities, events, camping and celebrations that are inclusive of carer's extended family as well as the looked after young people.

Amicus Foster Care is a forward thinking foster care agency. Remaining purposely small allowing us to step outside the box and develop bespoke services with no 'cookie cutter' approach as we know that working with young people, every story is different. We draw on highly experienced social workers and inhouse therapists, allowing for the best possible support for both young people and carers. Our dedicated team uses a trauma responsive approach to care, to ensure we keep the child at the centre offering P.A.C.E, a truly therapeutic care to children with complex needs. The P.A.C.E model helps carers secure attachments with the child and build a safe space for open communication. Amicus is determined to create the ideal environment for positive behaviour change.



Playfulness

Use a light-hearted, reassuring tone

- similar to parent-infant interactions
- to create an atmosphere of safety and reassurance where no one feels judged, and your child can cope with positive feelings.

Acceptance

Acceptance is about actively communicating that you accept the feelings, thoughts and internal struggles underneath the child's outward behaviour. It is not about accepting the behaviour but helping teach the child not to feel ashamed of their inner turmoil.

Curiosity

Curiosity, without judgement, is how we help children become aware of their inner life. It's about wondering out loud without necessarily expecting an answer in return. Phrases like "I wonder if..." will help the child to name their thoughts and emotions.

Empathy

Feeling a child's sadness or distress and being emotionally available to them during times of difficulty shows the child that they are not alone and that the adult is strong enough to support them.

Training

Amicus Foster Care is committed to providing and facilitating professional training and development for its foster carers, staff, and panel members. This could be via reading, modelling, shadowing, and/or attending internal and external courses. Amicus provides membership for each Fostering household to the Fostering Network organisation that provides a range of information and services to Carers and others involved in looking after children and young people.

“There is a wide range of training which is offered at Amicus. The nurturing attachment training has been really beneficial to us in our caring role. This is all backed-up with having support from Supervising Social Worker and Amicus Therapist who are on hand to support us to develop our skills in working with young people who have experienced trauma.”

Amicus Foster Carer

Activities



Amicus Foster Care activities are the hustle and bustle of the fostering calendar. We love the opportunity to meet up with the carers, their young people, and their extended families. We organise activities such as climbing, canoeing, swimming, pony fun, Christmas parties, camping and lots more! The carers and the young people love to meet up with their Amicus family and we find it really helps to build relationships with peers. It's a chance for carers and young people to meet others who are on the same journey as they are.

Fees and Allowances

At Amicus we pay our foster carers competitive professional fees and allowances, in recognition of the skilled and demanding work that they carry out.

The payment you receive from Amicus will be made up of two elements:

- **The maintenance allowance for the child**
- **The foster carer fee**

The allowance covers the costs of everything that you need to care for a child such as food, clothing, transport, personal items and household expenses. The fee part of the payment is effectively your salary for the time and skill dedicated to foster caring.

The amount that you receive for each of these components will vary depending on a number of factors, including the type of placement, the age of each child and the complexity of their needs. The Amicus fees and allowances are calculated on a nightly rate and is paid fortnightly.

For a free finance calculator please visit our website

www.amicusfostercare.com

ASPIRE Fostering

At Amicus we have big aspirations for our young people, foster carers and staff team. Joining Amicus you will be supported to be an ASPIRE foster carer. ASPIRE – means Ambition to Support children and young people achieve through Passion, Interaction, Respect and Empathy (ASPIRE). Here at Amicus, since the beginning and to this day we continue in our belief that ‘every child should have the right to experience a childhood in a family setting’. For some children this is not always possible, by providing ASPIRE to each and every one of our children and young people, we hope to provide enhanced wrap-around support to ensure children and young people thrive in the care of our foster carers.

By being an ASPIRE foster carer for Amicus, you will provide long-term home for children and young people, often aged between 10-16 years old, providing them with a safe place to live whilst we support you to be part of their journey.

As an ASPIRE Advanced carer you will be providing complex care to young people who have experienced significant trauma and associated challenges, or care to children and young people who may have complex needs with learning disabilities.

ASPIRE

Up to **£450** per child per week

Equivalent of up to **£26,000 Tax Free**

ASPIRE Advanced

Up to **£762** per child per week

Equivalent of up to **£41,000 Tax Free**

Parent and Child

Up to **£850** per child per week

Equivalent of up to **£45,000 Tax Free**

Self-Employment and Tax Relief

As a foster carer, you are classed as self-employed and are paid on a fortnightly basis, which not all agencies do, while you have a child or young person in your care. It is important to consider that you will not be paid any fees or allowances for any period that you are not caring and therefore as part of the application and assessment process we will discuss your financial circumstances and how you will manage during these periods.

As a foster carer your earnings will be subject to special tax arrangements which in most cases mean that you will pay very low, if any tax on your income from fostering. There's a fixed tax exemption of up to £18,140 per year which is shared equally among any foster carers in the same household. This means you don't have to pay tax on the first £18,140 income (after expenses) you make from fostering.

On top of the £18,140 exemption, you also get tax relief of up to £375 per week for each child in your care under age 11 and £450 for older children and adults. This means it is likely you will pay little tax if any.

If you currently receive benefits, these may still be paid alongside your fostering payments. For further information about working out your taxable income and eligibility for claiming working tax credit, visit the Government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>

Amicus pays foster carers a more competitive fee than what is stated on the gov.uk website.

Call us on - **0117 955 5039**

Email us at - **enquiries@amicusfostercare.com**



Fostering

Fostering is a way of providing a stable family life for children and young people who are unable to live with their parents at a point in time. This allows children the chance to thrive in a safe, secure, loving and caring home environment with foster carers.



Why do young people need fostering?

There are many reasons why young people cannot remain living at home with their birth parents. More often than not it is because it is unsafe for them and therefore local authorities will look for the young person to stay with extended family or find a local foster carers. However, this is not always possible, and they will look to Independent Fostering Agencies to provide a home for young people.

Many of these children and young people will have suffered from trauma and loss and will require therapeutic support in an appropriate foster placement.

“I have been fostering with Amicus since they began. I never realised that I would get this amount of support from them whilst doing this rewarding job. So anyone who really wants to make a difference don't think you can't, because you can!

The 'Amicus family are there for you.'”

Amicus Foster Carer



For children in school you will need to be around for them before and after school and during school holidays.

If your foster child is sick or excluded from school then it is your responsibility to care for them.

Who can become a foster carer?

We are looking for couples, families and individuals who can make space in their home and heart to help a young person through a difficult time.

You must be at least 21 or over to become a foster carer, have a spare bedroom and be able to drive. There is no upper age limit as long as you are fit and healthy enough to care for young people.

Your background

Amicus foster carers come from a variety of backgrounds. We have single foster carers as well as married and same sex couples.

We welcome applications from all diversities. You do have to be over 21 to foster, but if you have a sense of humour, patience, commitment, warmth and skill you will be nurtured and supported to be a foster carer for Amicus. We provide a high level of therapeutic support to you and your family and the young people you care for.

Types of fostering

There are many types of fostering options to choose from, depending on preference, circumstances and experience. Amicus can help you decide which is best and will allow you to provide the best care.



Short-term

This care is for young people whose plans are uncertain. Short term care is very flexible and could last from a few days or weeks to a few years.

Long-term

Long term care is for young people who will not be returning to their birth families, this requires a commitment from a carer to provide care for as long as needed, This could be up to the age of 18 or further. Unlike adoption the children remain in the care of the local authorities.

Complex Needs

As a foster carer you could be offering specialist care to children with complex needs, which can include a range of physical and developmental disabilities. Amicus offer a great deal of support to carers looking after children with complex needs.

Short-break

Short break fostering is when you provide care for a child or young person over a short period of time, usually somewhere between a weekend to a fortnight. This can be a 'one off' or sometimes a regular arrangement.

Parent & Child

Parent and Child fostering is where you offer a home to both. The parent may be under 18 so will be a looked after child themselves. Sometimes they may be pregnant so you can help them prepare. There may also be assessments to see if the parent has the capacity to care for their child. You will be provided with specialist training.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Many asylum-seeking young people have been separated from their families either in their homeland or on transit to the UK. In some cases the children speak little or no English. as a carer you can help teach these children the skills they need to build a new life and ways to overcome their traumatic past. We try to find homes for children where some of the culture or language may be known, however this is not always possible.

Amicus Foster care will provide all the training that is needed to provide the best care possible for young people in all the different care types. We will also provide on-going support making sure the young people and carers are living a happy life.



How Fostering can affect your family

Fostering involves the whole family and when you foster, your children foster too. Living within a fostering family can teach children vital life skills, such as patience and empathy, and many children who grow up in a fostering household go on to become foster carers themselves. However, some children can find it difficult to share their parents and belongings, or saying goodbye when a child moves on, but your Amicus supervising social worker will be there, not only for you, but also for your children. Amicus recognise the vital importance of building relationships and supporting the whole family.

There are Amicus-run groups for the children of all our foster carers, regardless of their age. Plus, there are a variety of activities and events held over the year for the whole fostering family.

As well as your immediate family, Amicus also recognise the importance of the help you get from your greater family, friends and neighbours, and Amicus offer support in whichever way proves more helpful, either meeting with them, or by telephone.

"In hindsight, growing up as part of a fostering family provided a rich tapestry of formative experience. I think it fair to say if I possess any of the qualities of compassion, empathy, tolerance, patience, or understanding, they were formed in no small part by the experience of growing up in this household; as part of this ever expanding family. Amongst teenagers, whose experiences, emotional and behavioural, were often quite different to many of my other peers, and through the example of my parents and their seemingly unending patience and tolerance, I learned that there was always more to understand of any situation, before you could really hope to begin to unravel it."

Son of Foster Carer

Stage

1



1

Initial Enquiry

Pick up the phone, send us an email or fill out our online form. A member of the Amicus team will be available to answer any questions you have and discuss whether fostering is right for you and your family. We will discuss the reasons for you considering fostering and find out about you and your family..

2

Home Visit

A social worker from the team will visit you at home. They will complete a brief assessment with you in relation to your wish to foster. They can also answer any further questions you may have, and allow you to share your understanding, ability and motivation for you to meet the needs of the children looked after. Together we will decide if fostering is for you and then progress to the next stage.



3

Skills to Foster

You will be required to attend a course called 'Skills to Foster' which is informative and will allow you to gain further understanding of what it means to foster a child or young person. The facilitation of this course is either online, or face to face. You will be supported by your supervising social worker or a member of the training team to complete this training. Your understanding of this course will be considered in your form assessment.



4

Application

Once the decision has been made to proceed, following the initial home visit, we will provide you with an application pack which includes; application form, application guidance, DBS on-line link, and mentor/buddy information. We will undertake some checks which include; police, Local authorities, finance, employment, education, personal references and a health check, which Amicus will fund. If we are happy with all the checks you can progress onto the next steps.

Stage 2



5

Assessment

You will be allocated an assessing social worker, who will undertake a number of home visits with you and your family. This will give you the opportunity to assess your support networks, accommodation and lifestyle, financial circumstances, income and expenditure, the reasons you wish to foster, and to reflect on your life experiences, and how they may influence your fostering career. The social worker will then produce an assessment report, which will be shared with you for your approval, before it is presented to the Amicus Fostering Panel.

6

Approval

You will be invited to attend the virtual Amicus Fostering Panel to meet with panel members, you will then have the opportunity to ask them questions. They will consider your assessment and will then make a recommendation about your approval as a foster carer(s). The final decision is made by the agency decision maker. Your approval is valid for twelve months, after which will follow annual reviews.



"Once you are approved as a foster carer, you will be allocated an Amicus supervising social worker, who will be on hand to help and support you throughout your fostering career."



How long does it take to become a foster carer?

From start to finish, it usually takes around 3-4 months for you to be all set up and approved. This includes background checks, assessments and training courses. We will always try to process your application as swiftly as possible. But please be aware that it can sometimes take up to six months before a child is placed with you.

Do I have to own my own house?

No, you can rent your home from a private landlord, council or housing association as long as you have their written permission to say that you can use the house to foster.

Can I decide which age or gender I would prefer?

We will decide together. During the assessment we will discuss the types of fostering that you may be interested in, as well as the ages and needs of the children.

I have a previous criminal conviction, can I foster?

Previous criminal convictions would not necessarily prevent you from fostering, it would depend upon the nature of the conviction and when it occurred. It is standard to complete a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check at an early stage in the assessment process. We will then decide whether or how it might affect your application.

How do I transfer from another agency?

It's quite straightforward to transfer from your current fostering agency to Amicus Foster Care. The quickest way to find out the best route is to give us a call so we can guide you through it.

Can I foster if I am over 55?

There is no official upper age limit for foster carers. If you can show that you have the experience, ability, and dedication to make a difference to a child's life then you are not too old.

What sort of checks will be carried out on me and my home?

As well as the DBS check, we complete checks with Local Authority. We obtain 3 personal references, which will include a reference from someone who is in your extended family, employers and ex-partners. We would also carry out a medical and financial assessment and a health and safety check of your home.

Who can be a foster carer?

You can be single and foster – but you will need to demonstrate a network of support, you don't have to own your own home – but you will need to demonstrate stability, your sexual orientation won't prevent you from fostering, your religion won't prevent you from fostering – but you will need to demonstrate how you can support a child of a different religion from yours or questioning their own faith, you don't need any formal qualifications – you will be trained with the skills to foster and be supported to achieve the training and development standards in England.

Will I receive training?

You will complete the preparation training course called 'Skills to Foster' during your assessment and following your approval you will receive comprehensive on-going training and development.

What support will I receive?

You will be supported by your supervising social worker who meets with you and will be in contact with you regularly. You will be supported by Amicus out of hours on call service, and you will also be invited to our foster care support group meetings, and therapy group meetings, alongside activities and social events.

Can I still work and be a foster carer?

We require at least one foster carer within a household to be at home on a full time basis. In some cases it may still be possible to continue working but fostering must be your primary focus as the expectation is that you will be available to attend training, support groups, children and young people's meetings.



Amicus

FOSTER CARE

0117 955 5039

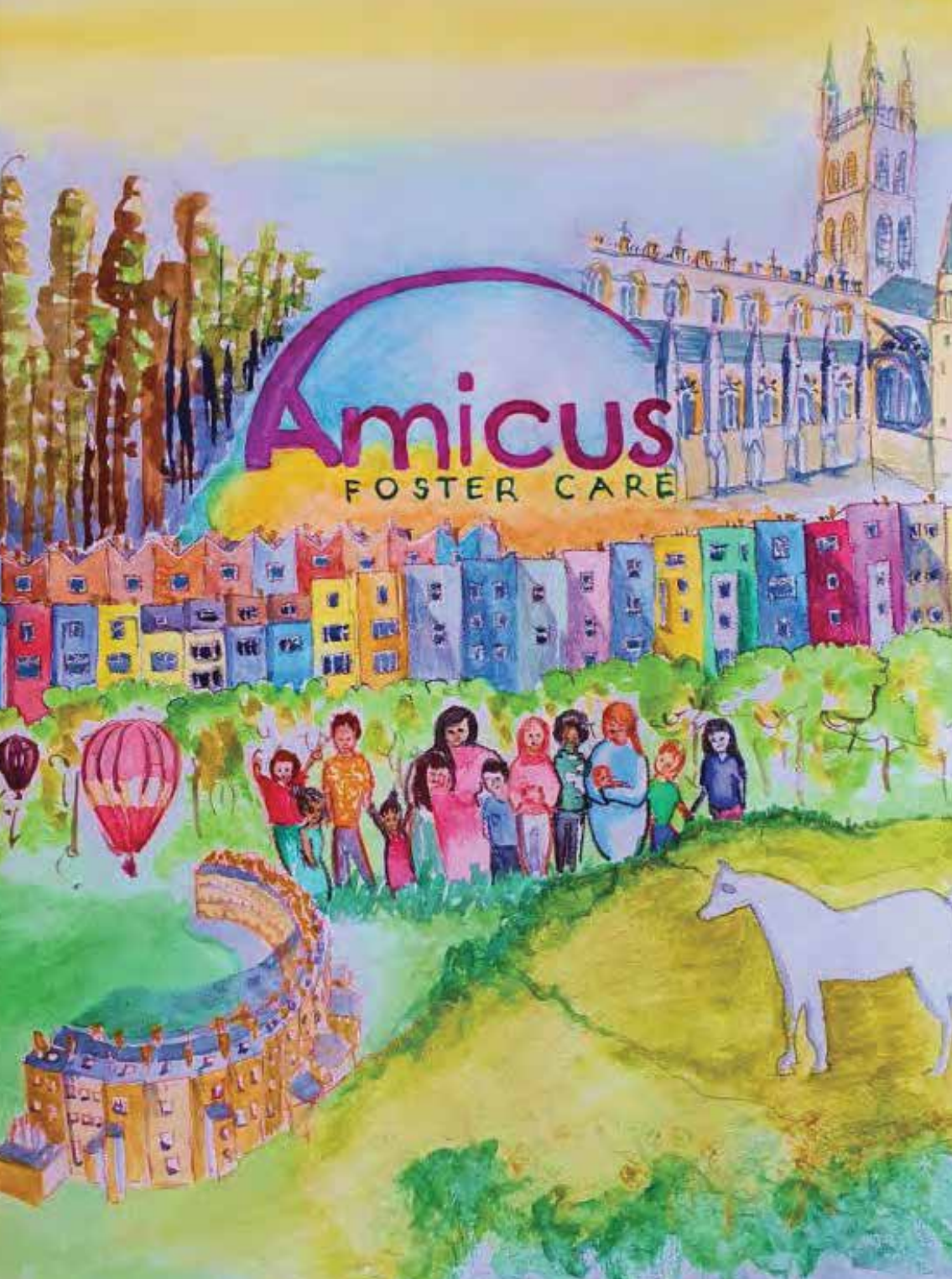
enquiries@amicusfostercare.com

www.amicusfostercare.com



Ofsted

Outstanding
Provider



supporting you to make a

DIFFERENCE

to a

childs life

This was hand drawn by Erin our complex needs coordinator

Call us on - 0117 955 5039

Email us at - enquiries@amicusfostercare.com

