



Tfwales
fostering



Introduction

TLC Wales was established specifically to provide family placements for children and young persons with learning disabilities, children who have been diagnosed as being on the Autistic Spectrum or who have a visual or hearing impairment and also children with a variety of physical disabilities and complex medical needs.

This agency prides itself on the fact that we offer what we regard as the 'personal approach' to a process which is fraught with traumatic experiences for young people and their families, not forgetting the social worker concerned. The success and the quality of the service we offer clearly leads to a greater volume of referrals. However we are determined not to be referral / resource led. When a placement is made with us, we attempt to offer any extra support services required by placing authorities.

The matching process is paramount to TLC's philosophy and we will not fill a vacancy because it's there. The children and young people we place are perhaps the most vulnerable in society. Not only do they have to cope with their disability, but also have to live outside their birth families with very little understanding of what is happening to them and limited ability to communicate their feelings. It therefore places a considerable responsibility on us to get it right. The introductions are a crucial part of our process. As a general rule we do not take emergency placements. However, if a child is known to us from a previous respite experience we will help a placing authority if we can. **The agency has committed experienced staff and for them it's not 'just a job'. One hopes that when you talk to us, this will become evident.**

"The success and the quality of the service we offer clearly leads to a greater volume of referrals."



Who are TLC Wales

TLC Wales is an Independent Fostering Agency. We were established in 2001 specifically to provide family placements for children and young people with disabilities and complex medical needs aged 0-18 years.

TLC (Wales) is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate if Wales (CSSIW) and is inspected on an annual basis, our last inspection had zero recommendations.

The inspector advised that **“Foster carers report very high levels of support from the agency and their supervising social workers”**.

TLC offers long-term, short term, shared cared, respite and parent and child placements for 16 authorities across Wales and a number of local authorities outside the Principality. We have excellent relationships with the local authorities who place children with our foster carers and have become the number one specialist agency for fostering children and young people with disabilities and complex medical needs.

Our guiding principles are that all children and young people should be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. The children and young people we place are perhaps the most vulnerable in society.

We believe that the experience of being looked after in a safe consistent family placement with mutually trusting relationships can provide the opportunity for personal development and growth. We aim to enable each child to reach their full potential whatever that might be.

TLC has a Tier 1 position within the 4C's (Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru)

Partnership with local authorities

TLC works in partnership with all the local authorities across Wales. We are seen as complementing existing services available to the local authority to meet the assessed needs of children and young people with disabilities.

As an agency we are aware of the pressures that the local authority social workers face. With this in mind staff of TLC maintain a personal approach with placing authorities, working closely with all agencies to become part of the professional team involved when a child or young person is placed in foster care.

The placing authorities we work with in Wales include:

- Torfaen
- Rhondda-Cynon-Taf
- Anglesey
- Caerphilly
- Merthyr Powys
- Bridgend
- Neath Port Talbot
- Vale
- Cardiff
- Swansea
- Blaenau-Gwent
- Monmouthshire
- Carmarthenshire
- Pembrokeshire
- Newport
- Ceredigion

What is Fostering

There is no one type of person who makes a good foster carer. If you have an interest in working with children, feel committed and are able to manage the different types of behaviour and challenges presented, you can be considered as a foster carer.

What do foster carers do?

By becoming a foster carer you will be providing a welcoming and caring environment where children and young people will be safe from harm, you will not only be offering them a chance to experience family life; you will be giving them the opportunity to grow and develop to reach their full potential, by helping to ensure that their health and educational needs are met.

It is important that you are able to feel committed to these children and are able to set appropriate boundaries to manage the different behaviours and challenges that may be presented.

Because of the difficult backgrounds that many 'looked after' children and young people have experienced, they may find it hard to build relationships.

With support, patience and reassurance, you can help a child or young person to build their self-esteem and confidence and learn to trust people again.

Fostering today involves working closely with Children, Families and Cultural Services, families, counsellors, teachers and other professionals involved in the welfare of the children you are caring for.

It may also involve regular hospital visits depending on the child or young persons disability.

Foster carers work closely as a team, not only with professionals in planning for the child or young person, but also in supporting each other and strong friendships have been formed over the years.

You will be asked to keep detailed written records and confidential, sensitive information about the children in your care. All 'looked after' children and young people have a care plan and you will be asked to attend meetings and reviews to talk about their progress. It is also important that you are able to acknowledge how your own personal experiences affect how you parent.

Our children come from diverse backgrounds with different life experiences; and a variety of disabilities. We try to match children with foster carers of a similar ethnic background, but this is not always possible and as foster carers, you must be willing to promote a child's culture and religious background, even if it is different to your own.

Fostering does impact on all family members and it is important that from the start the whole family know, are fully involved and supportive of, your wish to foster.

When families reach a point where they can't look after their own children, we need to offer support by providing a foster home.

Text 'TLC' to 66677 for further information regarding fostering with us.

Can you see yourself as a Foster Carer?

You can foster whatever your marital status, race, religion, gender or sexuality. You don't need to own your home and although it isn't essential that you have or have had children of your own, we hope you have some experience of caring for, or working with other people's children.

As part of the approval process, we will need to talk to you about your background and lifestyle so that we can get to know more about you and what you can offer a child or young person in foster care.

What is important:

- You have plenty of time and space in your life to care for a child or young person with a disability or complex medical need
- You have lots of energy and the ability to demonstrate a mature, responsible attitude
- You have the skills to work as part of a team
- You can show lots of kindness and understanding
- You can provide a stable and secure home
- You relate well to children and young people
- You are committed to training on a regular basis
- You consider yourself flexible and patient, as fostering can be both demanding and rewarding and it helps to have a sense of humour
- There is an expectation that you will have your own transport and be willing to take children to appointments and for contact

You need:

At TLC wales we are currently looking for foster carers who want to make a real difference to the lives of children and young people with disabilities. As a foster carer with TLC you will need:

- To be able to provide a nurturing environment
- The ability to provide a child with its own bedroom
- To successfully complete the assessment process
- Be willing to commit to a continuous training programme
- You would maintain confidentiality and keep clear recordings of information
- You have the ability to work in an anti-discriminatory way
- Be over 21 years old
- Happy to undergo a DBS (An enhanced police check)

“You can foster whatever your marital status, race, religion, gender or sexuality.”

About Fostering with us

TLC Wales offers specialist foster placements for children between the ages of 0-18 with a range of disabilities and complex needs.

We provide the following placements for children and young people with learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and hearing and / or visual impairments, as well as children with physical disabilities, genetic disorders and life-limiting conditions:

Short-term fostering

Foster carers look after the child for a few weeks or months whilst plans are made for their future.

Long-term fostering

Children and young people who are unable to live with their birth family permanently can go into long-term foster care.

Respite fostering

There are times when the demands of fostering means that a foster carer needs to take time out. TLC provides its foster carers with in-house respite, whereby registered TLC foster carers are identified as regular respite carers for children and young people placed within the agency.

Palliative fostering

The most experienced foster carers with nursing backgrounds look after children with life-limiting conditions.

Contact us on:

Crosshands: 01269 846371

The Children

TLC Wales recruits and supports specialist foster carers solely to care for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs. Our children can have hearing difficulties, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), physical disabilities, cerebral palsy, Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), PICCA, are deaf / blind, have a visual impairment, Late Infantile Batters Disease, Downs Syndrome, Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), Attachment Disorder as well as a range of other needs which lead to developmental delay.

We see children and young people with disabilities as the most vulnerable in society. By providing nurturing, secure family placements for them, they will have the opportunities to develop trusting relationships, be safe and reach the best possible outcomes in terms of care, education, health and social inclusion.

TLC expects its carers to relate to children and young people in their care with dignity and respect. Therefore, we train our foster carers in different methods of communication in order to provide a child-centred approach. We ensure that all information sharing is meaningful and that, wherever possible, the child is at the centre of discussions regarding their care plans.

“TLC expects its carers to relate to children and young people in their care with dignity and respect.”

Step by step guide to Fostering

- 1 Once you have registered your interest to foster with us. You will be contacted by a member of the TLC (Wales) team. Following this discussion we will arrange to visit you in your home. This visit is a good opportunity for us to answer any questions you may have about becoming a foster carer and for us to find out more about you.
- 2 After your visit, if we are happy to proceed, an application form will be sent out to you in the post. We will ask you to return your application form within a fortnight.
- 3 On Acceptance of your formal application, we will begin statutory background checks. You will then be invited to attend a compulsory 3 day Skills to Foster preparation training course.
- 4 Once checks and training have been completed you will then be assigned an Independent Social Worker, who will begin the assessment process with yourself and your family.
- 5 On completion of the assessment your assessor will produce a report, which we refer to as a Form F. The Form F assessment will provide an insight into your skills and experience, strengths, areas for development, personal qualities, attitudes, and what you can offer a child / young person with disabilities. The social worker will need to make a number of home visits in order to complete your Form F. The visits will also include meetings with your referees, family members and where appropriate ex-partners.
- 6 Once the Form F is completed, you will be able to read what the assessor has written. Following this, you will be required to attend the 'fostering panel', where your Form F will be presented by your assessor. The fostering panel is made up of a variety of professionals who have experience of the looked after children system. The panel includes a foster carer, social workers, educational and healthcare specialists.
- 7 The panel members will ask you questions regarding information presented in the Form F. You will be informed on the day if a recommendation is to be made for you to be approved as a foster carer with TLC (Wales).
- 8 The final decision on your application will then be made by the decision maker for TLC (Wales).

Statutory checks undertaken during step 3 will include the following:

- An enhanced DBS check - A fully enhanced check will be requested from the Disclosure & Barring Service (Previously known as a CRB check)
- Local Authority Checks
- Medical Reports
- Personal and professional references



Training and Support

The quality of our foster carers and staff is the cornerstone of TLC's reputation and success since it was established in 2001. Our foster carers are key in providing the best possible quality of care to the children and young people placed with us. We aim to offer sensitive yet thorough preparation training for new carers, and ensure that those already approved receive relevant, ongoing training.

In accordance with the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards for Foster Carers, the agency places an expectation on professional Foster Carers to commit to ongoing training.

The agency offers an extensive training programme available to approved carers as well as individual specialist training to meet the needs of specific children and young people placed with carers. Carers with TLC also have the opportunity of undertaking training to diploma level. Our dedicated Training Coordinator has developed a comprehensive rolling training programme to meet the needs of all our foster carers.

This includes training in:

- First Aid
- Manual Handling
- Food Hygiene
- Safeguarding Children (Child Protection)
- Life story work
- Record Keeping & Reporting
- Men Who Foster
- Developing Emotional Intelligence with Foster Carers
- Caring for the traumatised child
- Helping children through transition and change
- Caring for the carers
- Managing and Understanding Difficult Behaviour
- Autism
- Emotional Intelligence

- Sibling Relationships
- Attachment
- Communication and play
- Child Development

Other courses are available and we also offer online training.

Every Carer is allocated a Supervising Social Worker (SSW) whose responsibility it is to ensure that Carers are supported to enable them to carry out the task required of them. Carers receive regular quality formal supervision as well as telephone contact with their SSW.

Out-of-hours support service

In the event of an out-of-hours emergency, we offer an on-call service provided by an experienced social worker.

Support groups

TLC Wales offers foster carers the opportunity to participate in quarterly support groups and informal networks with other carers to share experiences and tackle difficulties together.

Annual events

TLC foster carers run a social committee that organises events throughout the year. They are a great way for carers, their families and young people placed with us to get together to socialise and enjoy themselves.

Children Who Foster

TLC Wales recognises the important role that foster carers' own children play in supporting Looked After Children and young people. The 'Children Who Foster' programme offers group opportunities for the young people who foster to get together, enjoy a fun day out and build a support network.

A Partnership with Local Authorities

A percentage of our new carers have no previous experience of fostering, although many will have experience of working with disability or children and young people with special needs, our experience is that such carers adapt more readily to the requirements of the new standards.

Some of our carers will have had experience of disability in a professional or personal setting, some having a medical or educational background. Perhaps more importantly they will now know how to tap into the potential of children and young people with disabilities; whatever that might be.

We do not place children or young people on an emergency basis due to the complex needs of most of the children and young persons referred. However if, for example, a child is known to us whether as a respite placement or a placement under consideration / introduction every effort will be made to assist the local authority and place the child / young person concerned.

Providing a child centred service of the highest quality remains the primary aim of TLC Wales Fostering.



What we offer

Currently TLC Wales offers long term, short term, shared care and respite placements. We are committed to working in partnership with the placing authority to identify the individual needs of the child / young person placed and any possible shortfall in services.

Services, which are then not available from health or educational resources, can be added on if required. TLC Wales core fees are designed to reflect the basic costs of the placement and the professional support provided.

Contact Service

TLC Wales carers are committed to facilitating family contact, wherever possible and where appropriate. In certain circumstances, when carers are unavailable and at the placing authority's request TLC Wales is able to provide support workers to transport children at a reasonable hourly charge and mileage cost. TLC Wales are mindful and sensitive to the pressures on social workers and are happy to assist the local authority wherever possible. As out of county placements become more common we feel it is vital that social workers are given every assistance in facilitating difficult contact arrangements.

TLC is a Tier 1 provider, under the framework in Wales.

Feedback from the 4C's (Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru) on 16th June 2015 reported that, "TLC had one of the best scores across the IFAs with the QPA reflecting over 90% in terms of quality of care."

Scores were based on, Young people's comments; child's case managing social worker and TLC's performance data on:

- Stability of placements
- Organisational development
- Training
- Quality of care and Notifications (very low regarding the latter)
- Health outcomes
- Educational achievement outcomes
- Emotional wellbeing / behavior outcomes
- Positive identity
- Social presentation
- Self-care skills
- Quality of information.

"TLC Wales carers are committed to facilitating family contact, wherever possible and where appropriate."

Respite Service

Breaks from caring can be a valuable support mechanism for carers who are looking after challenging children and young people. Regular respite may be considered as part of the support package or maybe required during breaks from school.

This service aims to maximise the quality of service for service users by the provision of a safe secure placement in a home environment.

TLC has designated carers who are able to offer **short breaks** and **respite 24/7** to a broad range of children and young people up to 19 years old. Our carers are tried and tested, with over **10 years experience** of fostering children with a range of disabilities and complex medical needs including:

- Challenging behaviour MLD / SLD / GDD
- PICA Attachment disorder
- Peg feeding
- Incontinence issues
- Smearing
- Sensory impairments
- Non verbal communication
- NG feeding
- Sexualised behaviour
- Physical disability
- Epilepsy

Our carers work in partnership with Health and Education to ensure the **best outcomes** for children in care. TLC has three carer households with adapted facilities suitable for **wheelchairs** and children and young people who need assistance with their mobility.

Our respite carers are **specially trained** and their property has been risk assessed by Price. This facility can also be used for shared care and short breaks.

They are able to conduct risk assessments and liaise with numerous healthcare professionals in a multi disciplinary setting.



A Day in the life of a Foster Carer

My morning starts just like everybody else's. My alarm goes off, I look at it, blurry eyed, and start to wonder about what I have to do that day. The difference is, I'm already at work.

I am available to be called on at any moment to help a child cope with a nightmare, to comfort them when they get upset and just to be a parent to them. Fostering is supporting a child or young person, something that they may have not even experienced before.

Being a Foster Carer can be the most challenging job in the world, but I also find it the most rewarding, and it thrills me to see young people blossom and develop into young adults ready to embark on their own. Hoping I've helped them to make decisions, and given them skills that they will use throughout adulthood, which they may not have been able to do without someone's support.

I have been a Foster Carer for 12 years now, I foster teenagers who show challenging behaviour. I was able to grow within my fostering career and change the age range that I cared for when my own child was growing up, so it always fitted with my family.

In the mornings, there are the usual questions: Toast or cereal? Have you got your PE kit? Have you got your packed lunch? And don't forget to tuck your shirt in! At what always seems like the very last minute, they rush off to school, just like other children. But fostering is not just parenting.

This morning's next task is to attend a fostering support group. As I enter the room, a group of familiar faces greets me, like-minded people who know exactly what I am going through, know exactly what it's like to have the responsibility of looking after someone else's child, know exactly how it feels to be conscious of whether I am doing the best I can.

Here I can share the "silly" questions. Here I can say "I'm not sure about how to do this", here I can just be myself, because I can share how things are going at home: progress, challenges, highs and lows. I can be rest assured that whatever I'm going through I am not the first, and I am able to share ideas of tried and tested responses to difficult moments. After a quick coffee and a chat I'm off again, on to the next job: school. The school and I identified areas that are causing the issues; this opportunity to talk to the school will allow myself and the young person to focus on the problems and work together to find a solution. It's time to head home now as it will soon be the end of the school day, and there's dinner to prepare and, after that, there will be homework to help with, dirty PE kit to wash, the usual!

Soon the house is bustling with noise and activity again, and so I ask, how did school go today? Just spending time asking these questions, allowing the children to answer in their own words, being interested in their day... sometimes that's all I need to do to show them that I care.

After dinner, I bring up the ideas we had at school, to maybe help with the issues that they were having. I ask them what they think, whether we could try this, or this, which idea they prefer and most importantly, what would work best for them?

A Day in the life of a Foster Carer

I can never promise I can sort out all their problems, but sometimes knowing that someone is there, someone is taking the time to think of them, taking a bit of the pressure off, sometimes that is all that is needed.

The evenings are usually spent relaxing, playing in the garden, riding bikes, watching television, choosing the sandwich filling for tomorrow's packed lunch, or even joining the local children at cub scouts for an activity or two.

Soon night falls, and the bedtime routine kicks in, with a shower, and "Don't forget to clean your teeth", with a tuck up in bed and a jolly 'Good night'. *We're just like many other homes around the country.*

The house falls quiet once again, and this is when I make notes of how the children's day has gone, and things I need to put on my list of jobs to do for tomorrow. *The paperwork involved can be time consuming, but I know why it is needed.* The whole team around the child work to create the best chances for them in the future and I work because I love to help a young person develop.

"Being a foster carer can be the most challenging job in the world, but I find it the most rewarding"



Visit: www.tlcwales.org.uk

Or call our office on:

01269 846371

