

Fostering with Match



Introduction

Welcome to Match!

Match is a friendly, family-run fostering agency. It was started in 2012 by Carrie and Simon Marsh. Carrie's parents were foster parents and Carrie counts the young people who she grew up with as her brothers and sisters. This experience inspired Carrie to start up her own fostering agency, based upon her own values of family membership.

What is Fostering?

In a nutshell, Fostering is parenting other people's children. What makes fostering so challenging and rewarding is that it's parenting children you haven't met before. And to make it more complicated still, it's parenting children and young people who have been let down by adults in the past.

Fostering can be very rewarding. But it's not easy. That's why it's so important that you join a fostering service that prioritises getting to know you really well, and then getting to know the children and young people you care for.



This relationship-based approach then enables us to provide the best possible support to you and your family.

Why choose Match?

If you've read this far, you've worked out that there is a vast range of fostering services. For someone new to fostering it can be really hard to tell which one to choose. All of them will tell you that they offer a high level of support. All of them will promise to treat you with respect.

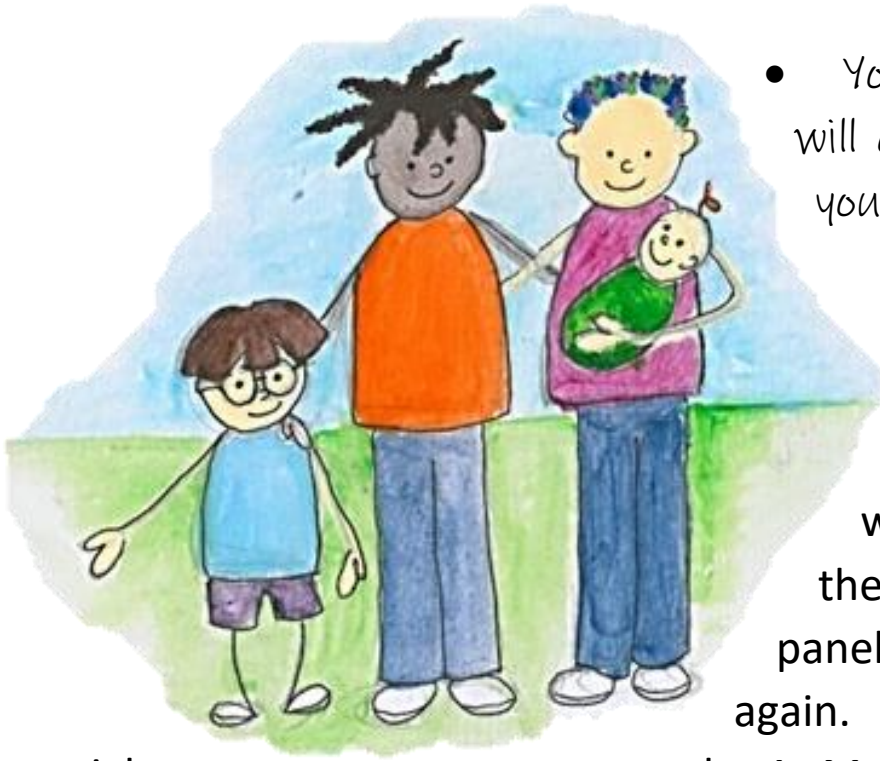


Here are just some of the things that we think makes Match different.

- *Lower caseloads*

To maintain this relationship-based approach, Match keeps the caseloads of social workers far lower than other fostering services.

This gives our social workers the time to spend with you and your foster children. At Match, we believe that it's impossible to know the best support to provide if we don't know the children and young people you are caring for.



- Your assessing social worker will continue to support you once you're approved.

Many large fostering agencies use independent assessors. They are paid to write a report about you and then present this to a fostering panel. Then you never see them again. We don't believe that is the right approach. At Match, we believe that there are lots of things we find out about each other that don't make it into the assessment report; things that will prove very useful when the time comes to consider which foster child is right for you. At Match, we choose a social worker to write your assessment who will still be your supervising social worker once you're approved. This means that by the time you are approved you know your assessor really well and they know you and your family really well.

- *A multi-disciplinary team around you.*

Since Match has been started, we have found that children can often be let down by the systems in place to support them, including health and education services. To address these shortfalls, Match employs a registered nurse, a therapeutic practitioner and an education lead.

Alongside our support workers, this means that we can help you meet the needs of your foster children without always having to wait for overwhelmed statutory services to step in.

- *We don't expect you to keep written records.*

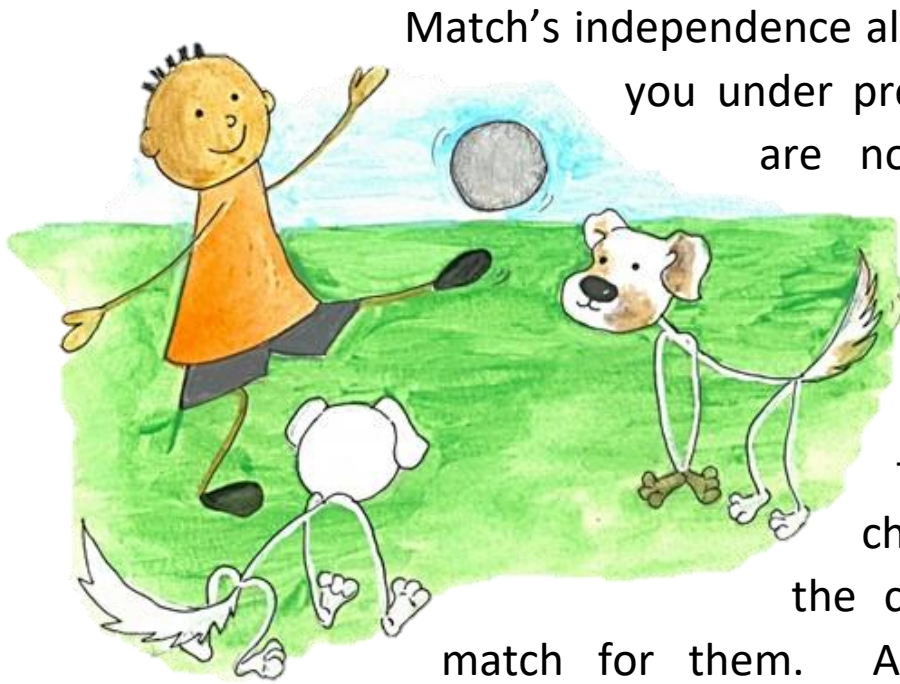
Most fostering services expect their foster parents to write down a daily or weekly log about their foster children. We think this is a bit pointless. We know from working in the sector a long time that these daily logs are often unread. We also know that, for many children, they become very repetitive. Foster parents don't usually enjoy writing down what's happened at the end of a long day, and they also don't enjoy being hassled to do them on a regular basis by their fostering service. Foster children don't like the thought of people writing about them all the time. They would rather get on with being children.

Instead, Match prioritises getting to know you really well and ensuring that there is always regular communication with you about how your children or young people are getting on.

- *Match is genuinely independent.*

Unlike some larger providers, Match is not financed by private equity. It is not driven by targets to make more 'placements' in a system to meet a business target. Instead, we are aiming to support children in families where they feel they can really belong. Of course, because we believe in our approach, we want to provide stable, loving homes for as many children as possible. But that is very different to chasing a target.





Match's independence also means that we won't put you under pressure to take children you are not comfortable to accept.

Sadly, because the care system is under such great strain, many local authority foster parents will feel the pressure to take on children, even when they feel the child may not be the best

match for them. At Match, you are always supported to reach the right decision for you and your family. We don't try to talk you into something that won't work in the long run.

- *Match includes family members in our activities*

Match invites all members of your households to our activities, including your children. If you come to one of our activity days it is hard to tell which children and young people are fostered. This brings us right back to the ethos that drove Carrie and Simon to set up Match in the first place.

Interested? So what happens next?

If you would like to know more, one of our managers will come out to see you to have an open and honest discussion about the rewards and challenges of fostering. We won't sugar-coat it, and if fostering is not for you, or Match is not the right agency for you, we will be open and honest about our thoughts. In return, we hope you will be as honest and open as possible.

If we all agree that Match is the right fostering service for you we then ask you to complete an application form. This triggers the start of your assessment.

So what is a fostering assessment?

There are several parts to the assessment process as set out below.

- *Background checks*

As you would expect, we need to check that you are suitable to care for other people's children. To do that, we need to build our assessment on background information about your character. This includes a DBS (police) check, a medical report and local authority checks. We also ask you to provide three people who will provide references for you: we interview these people as part of the assessment.

Please don't rule yourself out because of worries about these background checks. Talk to us about these – we take a positive approach to the issues we encounter. It's a lot easier if you let us know first because this helps to build up the trust that is so important for successful fostering.



- *Social Worker Report*

While we get on with these background checks, a social worker will be allocated to get to know you and your family. Because at this stage we don't know anything about the child you may foster, we have to prepare and assess you for a wide range of children, talking through how you would meet their needs and helping to build up the trusting, professional relationship that we will need when you are up and running as a foster parent.

- *Preparation Group Training*

During the assessment, you will be invited to preparation group training. This is run by one of our managers and usually takes place over a couple of evenings and a weekend morning. The final session is usually a question-and-answer session with one of our foster parents, giving you the chance to double check what you have heard in the training.

- *Young Person's Interview*



We also arrange for a fostered young person to interview you in your home. Again, this is a great opportunity for you to get even closer to the reality of fostering before you are approved.

The young people really enjoy being nosy as well, which is an added bonus.

- *Second Opinion Visit*

Towards the end of the assessment process, one of our managers will come out to your home to carry out a second opinion visit. This is a good opportunity for you and Match to double check we have discussed everything we need to discuss before going to the fostering panel.

- *Fostering Panel*

Once we have completed the report, we ask you to attend our fostering panel. This sounds a lot worse than it actually is.

In reality, the fostering panel's

job is to make sure Match has assessed and prepared you for the role of being a foster parent. That's got very little to do with how you answer the questions at panel. The recommendation of the panel is then considered by one of our senior managers, who makes the decision about your approval as a foster parent.

If all that sounds a bit daunting, don't worry. Nearly everyone who is assessed by Match says that they have enjoyed the process. We aim to complete the whole process within six months of your application.



Testimonials

“Match is the Rolls Royce of fostering services. If all fostering services did what Match does the care population would be so much happier.”

Local Authority Manager, November 2020

“Amazing agency very child focused which is what you need in the fostering system and the support is second to none couldn't ask for better and couldn't do the job without this kind of support.”

Foster Parent



“Great training opportunities, social gatherings, support always at the end of the phone or face to face. A lovely team to be a part of. Made some friends for life being part of team Match.”

Foster Parent



Testimonials continued...

“A fabulous family orientated team to be part of. Nothing is ever too much trouble. We receive great support, training and enjoy all the social family activities with Match.”

Foster Parent, August 2022

“They go far above expectations. Never known an agency to do so much. Excellent.”

Foster Parent



“I feel like part of the Match family. I know everyone on the team and they know me. Some people in care would say that they don't want a social worker in their lives, I don't feel like that. The people at Match are proud of me, they think I am brilliant and that makes me feel good. They see me as a young person who they want to spend time with and not as a young person who is looked after. Since I've known Match my confidence has grown”

Foster Child (Aged 15)



Any other questions?

We have not included everything we could say in this short leaflet, but I hope this gives you a flavour of why we are all so proud to work for Match. We are always happy to answer any of your questions.

We look forward to hearing from you.

