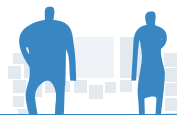




# DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL FOSTER CARE

OVERVIEW



## INTRODUCTION

Foster care is increasingly regarded as the placement of choice for many children and young people in care. In practice, however, each individual placement has its own unique dynamics and offers its own particular challenges. While at the same time, there is a clear underlying trend of young people presenting with ever more complex needs.

As a result, foster care is becoming a more involved activity and the wider sector is being professionalised. It is also now being recognised that specialist support for both the young people and their carers is essential if safe and stable placements are to be maintained.

The team of Clinical and Counselling Psychologists at CPA are highly skilled and experienced not only in working with looked after young people in families, but also in supporting carers and the wider placement components, such as schools, case workers and placing social workers.

### OUR SPECIALIST TEAM

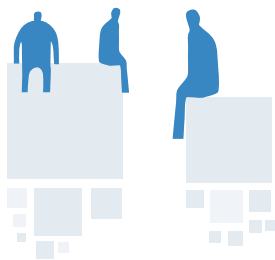
- All highly qualified, chartered and registered with the HPC
- All employed directly by us for consistency and quality (not associates)
- Available at locations across the UK
- All very experienced in working with children and families
- Use a range of evidence-based tools and therapeutic approaches



### OUR PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

- Enables agencies to develop and maintain higher value placements
- Increases the specialist skills and professionalism of carers
- Improves carer retention and prevents placement breakdown
- Enhances clinical governance, care planning and risk/behaviour management
- Maximises the effectiveness of Learning and Development budgets

CPA can work with your fostering agency to design and implement a flexible, responsive and cost-effective support system. This will deliver rapid and highly targeted psychological intervention whenever young people or carers are in need or placements are at risk of breaking down.



## CARER DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

Recruiting foster carers is a time consuming and expensive process. After selection, each carer becomes a valuable resource that requires significant input: first to equip them for the challenging task ahead, and then to develop and maintain their skills and confidence once a young person has been placed with their family.

CPA recognises that a tiered approach to delivering foster care is now emerging. This allows carers with different skill levels to be matched with young people with varying levels of need. However, where young people with very complex needs are being placed, carers need professional parenting skills to be shared, embedded and supported on an ongoing basis.

We empower foster carers by working directly with them, both individually and in groups. Our expert consultancy gives them a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological needs of the young people in their care. It also enables them to problem-solve any specific difficulties they are experiencing that might otherwise threaten the stability of the placement.

Supporting carers in this way makes them more proficient in their role, and allows them to present and engage more confidently in multi-disciplinary settings such as care review meetings. It also leads to more robust placement planning, improved carer retention, and more effective use of Learning and Development budgets.

## ASSESSMENT AND TARGETED THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT

Our therapeutic work is always informed by an assessment of needs that draws on a range of evidence-based measures and tools. Assessment may focus on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of the young person with a view to identifying their support needs and levels of risk. Or it may explore the resilience, parenting style and abilities of foster carers, or encompass siblings or other family members if required.

Following the assessment process, integrated care, behaviour and treatment plans can be formulated and, if appropriate, therapeutic support offered. This can take the form of individual or group sessions for the young person and/or their carers. Intervention might focus not only on resolving conflict or the young person's behavioural problems, but also on addressing their underlying emotional difficulties, such as trauma, loss, anxiety, low mood or low self-esteem.

Our psychological support draws on a range of evidence-based therapeutic approaches, including:

- Attachment theory
- Life story work (narrative therapy)
- Systemic and family therapy
- Psychodynamic psychotherapy
- Solution-focused therapy
- Cognitive-behavioural therapy
- Play and creative arts therapies
- Webster-Stratton parenting training



As well as building the resilience of young people, this therapeutic support can greatly enhance the quality of their relationships with their foster carers. And this can play a very significant role in both supporting transition and preventing placement breakdown, leading ultimately to much better outcomes.

## SPECIALIST TRAINING

According to NICE (2010), foster carers should “receive high-quality, core training from trainers with specialist knowledge and expertise” – a recommendation that is consistent with the trend of increasing professionalism in the fostering sector.

CPA offers a wide range of engaging and interactive training workshops that are specifically designed to enhance the theoretical understanding and practical competence of foster carers. These workshops can cover core areas such as positive parenting skills, managing challenging behaviour and building resilience in young people. Or if required, they can focus on more specialist skills such as managing self-harm or helping young people to overcome the consequences of neglect or abuse.

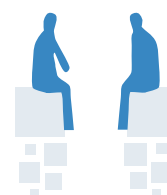
As well as enhancing the confidence and self-efficacy of foster carers, this training provides valuable opportunities for shared reflection and normalisation of their experiences. It can also potentially involve other key stakeholders such as care managers or supervising social workers.

Where these workshops form part of a wider support system for carers, they can be delivered in a systemic way and reinforced by our expert consultancy or supervision. This ensures that newly acquired skills and knowledge are translated into practice in placements. And this creates real scope for fostering agencies to offer more high value placements in which young people with complex needs can be cared for in a safe, stable and positive environment.

## OUTCOMES AND EVIDENCE

As with all publicly purchased services, it is essential to demonstrate the efficacy and value for money of foster placements and any additional therapeutic provision that is commissioned. CPA supports this in three specific ways:

- 1** Our working methods are all evidence-based and supported by research, meaning we can demonstrate the theoretical foundation of everything we do in practice.
- 2** We can provide a web-based Outcomes Monitoring System that is underpinned by widely used psychological measures of young people’s progress, including the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire and Resiliency Scale.
- 3** For all our psychological input with young people and carers, we provide a clear and detailed evidence trail for placing authorities, internal quality assurance systems and external regulators such as Ofsted.



**Contact us today to discuss your agency’s specific requirements.**

**(t) 0161 834 4662**

**(e) [enquiries@cpa-ltd.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@cpa-ltd.co.uk)**