We turn people who want to foster into confident carers who stay

You're not short of interest. You're losing it. We support your team to assess foster carers and turn more of the people who apply into in-house carers who stay.

The Why Care Guide for Local Authorities



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Our mission

We help local authorities turn people who want to foster into confident carers who stay.

Our vision Every child with the right carers, in the right home, at the right time.

What we do

3 services for **council fostering and kinship teams**, from first enquiry to the end of a carer's first year



1

Why Care Diagnostic

We find where your fostering service loses people

A detailed review of your fostering service, from first enquiry to the end of year one.

2

Why Care Assessment

We support your team to assess in small cohorts

Your social workers assess foster carers in small groups, on one shared digital assessment, ready for your panel.

3

Why Care First Year Support

We support new foster carers to stay

A Fostering Mentor, training, and group supervision through the first year.

From the first call to the end of year one

Our team brings first-hand experience of care together with social work, change management, and policy expertise.

1

A Conversation **Free**

A call about your fostering service, with no commitment.

2

Self-assessment **5 minutes**

Your team answers a few questions. We come back with a clear scope, cost, and timeline

3

The Diagnostic **6 weeks**

Data, interviews, workshops, and document review. You get an improvement plan at the end.

4

The Assessment **Around 4 months**

Your social workers assess foster applicants in groups of 5–10, with our support on the Why Care platform.

5

Your panel decides **Your panel date**

A call about your fostering service, with no commitment.



First Year Support **12 months**

A Fostering Mentor, 4 training days, the same peer group, and group supervision

Who does what

Your social workers assess. Your panel decides. We bring the structure, the platform, and the support around them.

Why Care

- Runs the Diagnostic and writes the improvement plan
- Provides the Why Care platform your social workers assess on
- Supports your assessing social workers from first visit to panel
- Runs the cohorts and the 8 training days for applicants and new carers
- Designs and delivers the practice scenarios with care-experienced young people
- Matches every applicant with a Fostering Mentor who supports them through out their application and First Year Support
- Delivers First Year Support

Your team

- Shares data and gives us access to people for the Diagnostic
- Your assessing social workers carry out each assessment, working with applicants in the shared assessment
- Keeps the professional judgement on every assessment
- Your supervising social workers carry on supporting carers once they're approved

Your panel and ADM

- Hears each application
- Makes every approval decision
- We prepare applicants for panel and never promise approval

Our services

What each service includes

Three services that work as one, so applicants and new carers are supported at every stage.

1 Why Care Diagnostic

An 8-day review of your fostering service

We find where your service loses applicants and carers, and show you how to fix it.

- We speak with everyone: foster carers, social workers, panel members, managers, and young people in care, including carers who withdrew or resigned
- We compare your data from first enquiry to approval against national figures
- We review real assessments, observe a panel, and read what applicants are sent
- A full report with recommendations within a month
- Evidence for your next sufficiency plan

2 Why Care Assessment

We support your team to assess, in small cohorts

For assessing:

Foster carers **Kinship carers**

Your social workers assess. We provide the platform, the cohorts, and the training around them. Applicants are ready for panel in around 4 months, while reducing social worker workload.

- Applicants go through assessment together, in groups of 5–10, and finish with a support network
- Your assessing social worker and each applicant work in one digital assessment and see the same progress
- Practice scenarios co-designed and co-delivered by care-experienced young people, so applicants understand the real experiences of care
- 4 days of standardised training for applicants during assessment, led by social workers
- A Fostering Mentor from the start
- A visual carer profile for every applicant

3 Why Care First Year Support

A full year of support from approval

New foster carers and kinship carers are never on their own in the year they need it most.

- A Fostering Mentor: an experienced foster carer to turn to
- The same peer group they were assessed with, so nobody starts fostering alone
- Support starts the day they're approved, with no gap before their first child arrives
- 4 training days for new carers, mapped to the new Fostering Development Standards
- Regular group supervision with others in their cohort
- Takes pressure off your supervising social workers in a carer's first year

What makes us different

Six things built into every Why Care service

Each one tackles a point where services lose people. Together, they take foster carers and kinship carers from first enquiry to the end of their first year.

01 Ready for panel in around 4 months

Applicants move through assessment at a steady pace, so fewer lose interest while they wait.

02 Assessed together, in small groups

Your applicants go through assessment together, in groups of 5–10, and finish with a support network.

03 One shared digital assessment

Your assessing social worker and each applicant work in one digital assessment and see the same progress.

04 Shaped by care-experienced young people

Practice scenarios co-designed and co-delivered by care-experienced young people, so applicants understand the real experiences of care.

05 8 days of training for your carers, led by social workers

Applicants get 4 days of training during assessment and 4 more in their first year as carers, so every foster carer and kinship carer starts with the same foundations.

06 A Fostering Mentor for every new carer

Every new foster carer is matched with a Fostering Mentor and supported through their application and first year.

Who we are

Lived experience and professional expertise, in one team

Our team brings first-hand experience of care together with social work, change management, and policy expertise.

We know the new standards from the inside

Niketa Sanderson-Gillard, Founder of Why Care, was the lead drafter on the national minimum standards. Luke Rodgers BEM was the engagement lead. Everything we deliver is built to help your service meet them.



Niketa Sanderson-Gillard

Founder & CEO

Bio goes here

Luke Rodgers BEM

Head of Partnerships

Luke builds Why Care's partnerships with Local Authorities and helps shape how we talk about our work. A lived experience leader and founder of The Care Leaders, he has spent more than a decade co-designing projects with Local Authorities, The Fostering Network and the Department for Education. He received the British Empire Medal in 2018 for his work with young people and families.

Why I care: children's social care should be built from the lives of the people who have experienced it.



John Rolph

Head of Practice

John leads practice across Why Care's Diagnostic, Assessment and First Year Support model, so Local Authorities get carers who are well prepared and well supported. A Social Work England registered social worker with over a decade in children's social care, he has worked in child protection, led teams supporting teenagers at risk of entering care, and assessed and supported foster carers.

Why I care: I've seen how much the right foster carer can change a young person's life.



Abbey Watt

Operations Manager

Abbey works across operations and programme delivery, supporting the team and the Local Authorities we work with. Originally from Aotearoa, New Zealand, she has spent over a decade in and around children's social care in England, including supporting the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

Why I care: talking to people with experience of care has taught me that it really matters that the system, and the people within it, get it right.



Sidra Nabeel

Programme & Operations Co-ordinator

Sidra co-ordinates events, programme delivery and administrative support at Why Care. She works within the team to arrange and assist with logistics, as well as aiding and supporting applicants through the assessment process. She approaches her work at Why Care with diligence, adaptability, and an analytical eye.

Why I care: because I believe that every applicant deserves to have a stress-free assessment process.



Alexandra McKinney

Brand & Design Lead

Alexandra designs how Why Care looks and sounds, so foster carers and Local Authorities can find us and understand what we do. As a freelancer, she crafted design assets and brand identities for charities and social enterprises, including Why Care, before joining the team. She now shapes everything from our brand to our website and social channels.

Why I care: I believe clear, thoughtful design can make assessment simpler and help great carers stay.

Why we exist

Interest isn't the problem. What happens next is

The sector keeps trying to recruit its way out of a process problem. Good people give up, or start fostering frustrated, and children are matched with whoever is available, not whoever is right for them. We exist to change that.

The evidence	The problem	How we help
6%	**Interest drops away before people apply** 6% of 125,195 initial enquiries became an application in 2022–23 (12% for councils).	The Diagnostic follows your journey from first enquiry, so you can see where interest drops away.
3,290	**Most applicants withdraw before panel** 3,290 households withdrew from assessment in 2024–25, while 2,050 were approved. Fewer than 1% were rejected.	Applicants go through assessment together, in small groups, so fewer give up along the way.
37%	**Assessments take too long** 37% of approved council applications took longer than the expected 8 months to reach panel in 2022–23.	With our support, your applicants are ready for panel in around 4 months, with less paperwork for your social workers.
255	**More carers leave than join** 255 fewer fostering households in 2024–25: 4,690 left and 4,430 joined.	The Diagnostic shows where your service loses carers and what makes them stay.
31%	**New carers leave early** 31% of council foster carers who left in 2021–22 had been approved for less than 2 years.	First Year Support gives every new foster carer and kinship carer a Fostering Mentor, training, and group supervision.
£8,400	**Every carer lost has a cost** £8,400 more a year per child for an agency placement than an in-house one in 2020. A children's home placement averaged £3,830 a week.	We help you turn the interest you already have into in-house carers who stay, and rely less on agency placements.

Figures cover England. Sources: Ofsted, Fostering in England 2024–25 and 2021–22. Ofsted, Recruitment and retention in mainstream fostering (March 2024). Competition and Markets Authority, Children's social care market study (March 2022), and CMA data as reported by Community Care.

Questions

Questions commissioners ask

Do you assess our applicants for us?	No. Your own social workers carry out every assessment. We support them with the Why Care platform, small cohorts, practice scenarios, and training, so assessments move faster and take less paperwork.
Does Why Care approve foster carers or kinship carers?	No. Your fostering panel and Agency Decision Maker (ADM) approve carers. We get applicants ready for panel and your panel has the final say.
Who can be assessed with Why Care?	We can deliver programmes for mainstream foster carers and/or kinship carers. Whether someone is new to fostering or already caring for a child they know, your social workers assess them using the Why Care Assessment and approach, ready for your panel.
Who do you involve?	Your leaders and staff, your foster carers and applicants, and the children and young people who live with the result. Care-experienced young people co-design the practice scenarios in the Why Care Assessment.
What does it mean for our assessing social workers?	They spend their time assessing, not chasing paperwork. They and the applicant work in one shared assessment and see the same progress. Practice scenarios show how applicants respond to real situations. Your social workers keep the professional judgement. The platform does the admin.
How does First Year Support fit with our supervising social workers?	It sits alongside the support your supervising social workers already give. The Fostering Mentor, training days, and peer group take some of the pressure off them in a carer's first year.

Join us in turning people who want to foster into confident carers who stay.

Right carers. Right home. Right time.

Book a free call, with no commitment, or email admin@whycare.org.uk

why care