

Working with Sparks Fostering

Description

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<https://sparksfostering.org/wp-content/uploads/speaker/post-8538.mp3?cb=1703789442.mp3>

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Thinking About Fostering?

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Recommend someone to foster?

Find out Bonus Payments For Referring Foster Carers

Refer A Staff Member?

Find out Bonus Payments For Referring A Staff Member

Sparks Fostering recruits staff and foster carers throughout England.

Thank you for your interest in working with Sparks Fostering – we are confident that you'll be interested in what we have to offer, and we hope that you will feel excited about the possibility of working with us.

Sparks Fostering working is mostly remote/online, but all staff must be available for local visits and meetings when required. We allow staff to work the hours that suit them, to have pay directly related to the amount of work done, and to make it much easier for motivated staff to progress. We also provide a comfortable, supportive and rewarding working environment to encourage stability and longevity in work.

We are transparent about the work and the pay. We value work/life balance, and we give fair pay

(which is considered generous in comparison to other providers).

To proceed, review the following job descriptions and person specifications to see how you could fit in with the Sparks team.

Please click the icons to read further about each role

Panel Members

Job Description:

- Panel members are paid £100 to review a full (initial) fostering assessment and £30 per hour for the panel meeting. Panel chairs and experienced social workers are paid £130 per full (initial) report and £40 per hour for the panel meetings.
- Panel members read and review fostering assessments (and other documents as required) and contribute to discussions about them.
- Panel members must also be able to give feedback about the performance of Sparks Fostering, based on the reports provided to them.
- The panel chair ensures that each member of the fostering panel is able to contribute meaningfully to discussion about panel business. The panel chair ensures written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the key issues and views expressed by panel members and record the reasons for its recommendation. And the chair completes the annual performance reviews of other panel members.
- Panel members are expected to engage in induction (to be completed within 10 weeks of signing the engagement agreement), training (attend at least once/year) and annual appraisals (once/year). There is no additional fee for this aspect of the work.
- Panel members are expected to understand and adhere to expectations around [record keeping and confidentiality](#).
- Panel work is very flexible and panel members can attend when they are available – there is an expectation that panel members would attend at least one panel every two months.
- Panel members can also work as recruiters, support workers or social workers if they meet the person specification.

Person Specification:

- Panels are multi-disciplinary teams with relevant experience; panel members include health professionals, education staff, current or previous foster carers, care experienced young people or adults, social care professionals, elected council members, or faith/community leaders.
- Fostering assessments are lengthy and detailed, so good literacy and analytic skills are required.
- Panel members must show motivation to learn about the needs of children in care and should have had a look through the information on the Sparks Fostering website. Training will be provided.
- The panel chair is required to have a sound understanding of the fostering process; the authority and competence to chair the panel; the ability to analyse and explain complex information; the ability to identify key issues, problems and solutions; and excellent interpersonal, oral and written communication skill.
- The panel chair must be independent of Sparks Fostering

Recruiters

Job Description:

- The experts at Sparks Fostering can work with you to recruit foster carers. Your recruitment plan is led by you, but we will give you advice.
- Recruiters are motivated to increase the number of foster carers, so that better care can be provided to children in fostering homes.
- Sparks Fostering provides material (such as flyers and posters), can attend initial events with you, and you will get referral bonuses for every successful referral – see [this webpage](#) for information about referral bonuses.

Person Specification:

- Recruiters need to be sociable, confident, and happy to speak with strangers. You also need to be able to write down contact information, and be able to learn about fostering.
- It helps to have a wide network of friends and family, because it may be possible to recruit foster carers from within your own networks.
- Everything you need to know about foster care is on the Sparks Fostering website – we can support you with your learning so that you can give good advice to others.
- Basic checks (such as Enhanced DBS and references) will be carried out for recruiters who wish to represent Sparks Fostering formally. Recruiters who work within their own networks do not need to complete checks.

Support Workers

Job Description:

- Support workers are paid £90/month for every foster carer that they support, and additional £90/month for every child who is placed into the fostering home. Support workers with full caseloads should be able to manage about 10 families and 15 children – so the annual pay could be up to £27,000.
- Support workers may also be involved in the assessment of foster carers if they are interested in doing this. The assessment work would be largely administrative and pays £15/hour.
- People who recruit foster carers may also wish to go on to be support workers for the people they recruit.
- Support workers help foster carers to make sure that all their recordings are up to date. Support workers call foster carers on a weekly basis to check if there are any updates, and they make sure the updates are recorded accurately.
- Support workers also provide emotional, practical and (to some extent) professional support when foster carers are struggling with care of the children.
- Support workers may spend some time with the child, helping the child feel like they're part of a safe and welcoming family and support network who value the child.
- On occasion support workers may need to take calls or visit children out of office hours, if there are significant challenges in caring for the child/ren.

- Support workers also attend professional meetings when the social worker is not required or is not able to attend.

Person Specification:

- Support workers need to be friendly and sociable.
- They also need to be confident about communicating with children who are upset or angry.
- Support workers need to have quite good recording skills and are able to write a few clear paragraphs on a Word document. Spelling and grammar is not so important, but the message must be conveyed well.
- Support workers need to have an interest in developing knowledge about childcare and fostering. Sparks Fostering can help you to develop that knowledge.
- Support workers are required to read the information on the Sparks Fostering website.
- Full employment and safeguarding checks are carried out.

Social Workers

Job Description:

- Qualified social workers are paid £180 per month per foster carer and also £180 per month for every child who is in the fostering placement. Social workers who are supervising 12 families and 18 children (each with an allocated support worker) would earn up to £64,800.
- Social workers may also complete the fostering assessments and are paid £40/hour for the work.
- Social workers complete fostering assessments, offer advice and support to applicants and attend panel. Social workers offer any support needed to applicants to help them to complete the application process.
- Qualified social workers provide professional supervision and support to foster carers, provide supervision to support workers, and attend professional meetings.
- Social workers may need to provide out of hours support if there is no allocated support worker or if the support worker is struggling.
- Current support workers who wish to become social workers are supported by Sparks Fostering as far as is reasonably practicable – Support workers would be required to cover the cost of their social work qualification and Sparks Fostering would offer the required training placement and guidance.
- Social workers may also choose to be recruiters, and may choose to be the support worker as well as the social worker. This would mean that a qualified social worker would get the referral fee (as outlined above), and potentially do the support work (and get the fee outlined above), whilst also completing the social work task.

Person Specification:

- Social workers have professional qualifications and are registered with the social work regulator.
- It is expected that social workers have read the information about fostering on the Sparks Fostering website.
- Social workers need to have good social skills and good written skills. Literacy skills need to be 'court-report' quality.

- Full employment checks are carried out.

Registered Managers

Job Description:

- RMs are paid £50/month per foster carer and £50/month per child looked after in their team. An RM who is line managing 9 social workers with full caseloads would be earning up to £108,000 per year.
- Social workers who meet the person specification for the role are supported by Sparks Fostering to become Registered Managers (RMs).
- Social workers who do not meet the specification, but are interested in progressing to RM level are supported to do so.
- The RMs would cover the costs of registration with Ofsted, and the cost of Level 5 training. Sparks would support with the logistics for this.
- Sparks would offer additional training, supervision, a Responsible Individual, support and access to the agency processes, templates, panels, and other infrastructure (including accounting, contracts and other business related needs).
- The RMs would only need to focus on line-management responsibility of their social work team, facilitating their team's support needs, producing management reports and managing Ofsted communication for their team.
- If social workers within the team need out-of-hours support, RMs are required to be available for this.

Person Specification:

- Registered Managers have a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services qualification (or they will enrol for the qualification within 6 months and obtain the qualification within 3 years).
- RMs have at least two years' experience relevant to fostering within the past 5 years. Sparks Fostering can support social workers to gain the relevant experience if needed.
- Have at least one years' experience supervising and managing professional staff. Sparks Fostering can support social workers to gain the relevant experience if needed.
- Be confident in carrying out management audits and producing management reports. Sparks Fostering can train social workers to do this work.

RI and ADM

Responsible Individuals (RIs) are most likely to be appointed as a result of being experienced Registered Managers, or as successful recruiters (including support workers). Where gaps in the person specification are identified for Sparks Fostering staff, Sparks Fostering endeavours to support staff to develop the necessary skills and knowledge if they wish to become RIs or ADMs.

RIs are usually expected to be agency decision makers (ADMs); ADMs are experienced socialworkers. If the RI is not a social worker, an ADM would need to be employed. In this situation the RI and ADM would effectively share the job role.

Job Description:

- Responsible Individuals are paid £15 per month for foster carer or child in their team (if they are also doing the ADM role). RIs could potentially oversee the work of 4 registered managers – who (between them) could potentially be responsible for 432 foster carers and 648 children. This would equate to a potential income of £194,400pa.
- When the RI and ADM roles are completed by different people (because the RI isn't a qualified social worker), the ADM is paid £5/month for foster carer or child in the team. The RI would receive £10/month for each foster carer or child in their team.
- It should be noted that this figure is only likely to be achieved by individuals who work exceptionally hard and are industry leaders in terms of recruitment. Most RIs or ADMs are likely to work part time and only line manage one or two RMs.
- Sparks Fostering supports appropriately qualified and experienced individuals to become registered with Ofsted; however, the registration fees are to be covered by prospective RIs.

The RI must

- Undertake such training as is appropriate to ensure that they have the experience and skills necessary for the role.
- Attend quarterly management reviews to ensure the sound running of the service.
- Take action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which are raised with them.
- Notify Ofsted and any other relevant organisations of any significant changes to the agency.

The ADM must

- Make decisions about the approval or deregistration of foster carers based on the recommendation of panel (and all accompanying paperwork)
- Consider the recommendation of the Independent Reviewing Mechanism before making a decision (where this applies)
- Ensure that appropriate panel process have been followed
- Ensure that all relevant paperwork is received before making a decision
- Comply with decision making timescales, as outlined in fostering regulations and the Children's Act.
- Attend quarterly management reviews as a senior member of staff

Person Specification:

The RI must

- Know the Sparks Fostering policies and procedures well (all available to view on the website).
- Have an excellent recall of the processes outlined in the Complaints and Whistleblowing Policy.
- Have a reasonable understanding of the safeguarding needs of children in care.

- Have good knowledge and experience of law and practice relating to looked after children.
- Have business and management skills to manage the work efficiently and effectively
- Have financial expertise to ensure that the fostering service is run on a sound financial basis and in a professional manner.
- Not have been bankrupt in the past.

The ADM must:

- Be a qualified social worker with at least 3 years post-qualifying experience in childcare social work and has knowledge of childcare law and practice
- Have experience of foster care and family placement work
- Be trained in assessment

Next steps – Application

Informal recruiters are not required to formally apply – you can submit referrals and receive the bonus payments. Informal advice and support can be offered by contacting the team at info@sparksfostering.org.

Also, please note that adults with care experience are given additional support with completing the application process – click here to read more about the support available to adults with care experience.

Applicants are required to complete the following recruitment steps:

Step 1: CV

Send your CV to info@sparksfostering.org (or via the contact form below) and in your email state which role(s) you are interested in. You will receive a reply within 2 working days to advise if you should progress with the application.

Step 2: Sample of writing

If asked to do so, submit a sample of assessment writing to info@sparksfostering.org.

Alternatively, watch the video [here](#) and answer the question ‘Why did the foster carer struggle with the child’s behaviour?’ Limit your answer to a maximum of 250 words.

Step 3: Declaration

If you are asked to do so, complete [this form \(click link to open\)](#).

Also, please clarify your availability for interview.

Step 4: Interview

If successful, you will be invited for interview.

The following questions will be asked at interview:

- Why do you want to work for Sparks Fostering?
- How does working for Sparks fit in your career plans?
- What did you think about the Sparks Fostering policies and procedures that are on the website)?
Note, the main policies are visible via a link to 'Core Information' on the bottom menu.
- What aspect(s) of previous employment (including the work, the employers and colleagues) have you found challenging?
- What particular skills, abilities and knowledge do you believe you can bring to the team?
- Do you drive and/or what areas are you able to cover?

Step 5: HR information

Employment checks will be carried out, including an Enhanced DBS check, professional reference checks, personal reference checks, and ID checks.

Applicants may wish to note that all of the Sparks Fostering processes (including recruitment) are in line with the Sparks Fostering Equality and Diversity Policy, which can be viewed [here](#).

A contract will be issued when checks are successfully completed. After this, you will receive training, support and supervision so that you can fully enjoy the experience of being a member of the Sparks Fostering team. Welcome!

Join Sparks Fostering team

Date Created

November 10, 2022

Author

user