

FREE NEW FAMILY SOCIAL (NFS) MEMBERSHIP FOR OUR LGBT+ FOSTER CARERS

Fostering February

07/02/20

New Family Social: Dedicated support and advice for both potential and existing foster carers identifying as part of the LGBT+ community

We are immensely proud to announce that we have become an official member of **New Family Social (NFS)**, an LGBT+ peer support network offering advice and relevant support to guide you through every step of the **foster carer application process** and beyond.

Being an inclusive fostering family of independent agencies means that we will always look for innovative ways in which we can best help and support all of our foster carers, no matter which societal groups and communities they belong to.

As the National Fostering Group, we wanted to go one step further when inviting people in the LGBT+ community to enquire about fostering with us.

Who are New Family Social?

NFS is the only UK charity led by LGBT+ adopters and foster carers. This means that they are wholly understanding of not only the process of becoming a foster carer, but also the unique queries and challenges faced by LGBT+ people embarking on their fostering adventures.

Start your fostering journey today

ENQUIRE NOW

The charity started in October 2007, where a total of 20 adopting and foster families and prospective families met in London for the first 'New Family Social' event. The event was in direct response to the growing need for LGBT+ adopters and foster carers to have a welcoming platform from which they could help and support each other.

Further interesting facts about NFS include:

- Membership of over 3,662 households across the UK
- Provides support on behalf of local authorities and fostering agencies, who pay an annual subscription
- Has active regional groups across the UK and a secure, busy online members' area
- Arranges national family events

The annual **LGBT+ Adoption & Fostering Week** is also an NFS initiative. Since the inaugural campaign in 2002 its collective support has grown year-on-year, and it's no coincidence that the campaign's success is mirrored by soaring numbers of LGBT+ people who've now adopted or are fostering. While there are no national statistics of the number of LGBT+ foster carers, in 2018 1 in 8 adoptions in England were to same-sex couples.

The benefits of membership for our foster carers

If you are currently a LGBT+ carer with one of our independent agencies, or plan to be in the future, you will be able to sign up for NFS membership free of charge.

We spoke to **Jamie Johnson, Agency Membership Officer** at NFS, to find out more about what's available to you as an LGBT+ foster carer who is a member of the charity.

"The peer-to-peer aspect is key", said Jamie.

"Our membership includes access to our online forums, where you post anonymously under a username you choose. Our forums for our LGBT+ members are only accessible to those adopting or fostering who've been approved to use the forums via their respective agencies".

"This means members can pose questions and share information that maybe they didn't feel comfortable enough to ask a social worker".

"You might ask them about money, digs, house or flat size, or how big an issue is not having a garden - there is simply no judgement on the questions being asked".

"Our primary aim is to support LGBT+ people in building their families through adoption or fostering. This support network is available both during the application process and continued after a placement has been made. Your need for peer support doesn't disappear once you start parenting children".

The National Fostering Group is welcoming of the cause of LGBT+ carers and we recognise their resilience and strength.

We believe such attributes are invaluable when caring for children and young people who have also been through challenging experiences in their lives so far, which Jamie expands upon:

"The unique challenges faced in the personal lives of LGBT+ carers - in terms of the close intersection of who they are as people - means that they don't need to approach foster care with a completely raw picture of what it's going to be like", Jamie continued.

"The children they look after may have faced different challenges, but are still challenged by something fundamental in their lives which often means LGBT+ carers will be highly understanding of their situation".



Relaxed yet empowering summer camp

One of the standout events open to our foster carers who sign up to NFS includes the annual summer camp, where members come together in a judgement-free environment to unwind and exchange stories about all things fostering and life in general.

"Our summer camp event for our members involves hiring out an entire campsite in the Midlands, so it's a place that everyone can get to from around the country".

"It's surely for LGBT+ adoption and foster families. At the 2019 camp, just under 500 of our members and their children holidayed with other families that looked like theirs".

"It's a really relaxed atmosphere, so people can let their guard down a little bit and share challenges and successes from their own lives".

Local events ran by volunteer coordinators

NFS' work is supported by a network of volunteer regional coordinators. They've typically been members of NFS for some time and will have a vast amount of experience in caring for children. This helps them create fantastic events in your area aimed at creating an informal atmosphere where you can feel free to ask as many questions about fostering as an LGBT+ carer.

"They will arrange local events which can be anything from adults only 'go down the pub and have a laugh' type of event to a Saturday afternoon in the park with birth or foster kids".

"These events are open to whoever wants to attend, as long as you're a member of NFS. It's also somewhere where you can go along and feel free to ask questions such as 'What questions am I likely to be asked when I'm being assessed?' Or 'What's the situation regarding allowances?'"

Addressing LGBT+ specific questions

"It's important to get across a particular message to potential LGBT+ foster carers when it comes to having concerns over whether you have pets, can afford to foster, or that you may be treated differently as a member of the LGBT+ community during the assessment process.

Nothing is ever considered in isolation and the bigger picture of being able to care appropriately for a child is all that matters".

"We also arrange training for social carers on how best to communicate with LGBT+ people looking to foster".

If you are currently a foster carer with us and identify as LGBT+, then you can fill in your details on the **NFS membership page** to start using the charity's support services today!

Fostering February

16.01.20

Fostering February 2020

Fostering February

31.01.20

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Fostering February

31.01.20

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campaigns

to

foster care fortnight

Fostering February

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Stories

Start your fostering journey with National Fostering Group

- We have fostering agencies all across the UK
- Over 3,000 carers already part of our family
- Benefit from our local support groups and social workers

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