

OASIS NETWORK



Essex County Council

THE OASIS NETWORK

WHAT IS THE OASIS NETWORK?

The **Oasis Network** is a simple ‘extended family model’ of support for foster families. An experienced foster carer, the **Oasis Carer**, offers peer support, advice, mentoring and respite care to other foster families, the **Network carers**.

Each Oasis carer supports between 6–10 Network carers. The whole Oasis Network regularly gets together for social and learning events and every child in care is encouraged to have ‘sleepovers’ with the Oasis carer. This creates a supportive community around each foster family with the aim of improving placement stability, providing meaningful support to carers and children and reducing the potential for both carers and children to feel isolated.

Relationships are key to the Oasis Network, the Oasis carer encourages strong relationships to develop, empowering families to overcome problems before they escalate and increasing protective factors around children, which prevents the likelihood of placements breaking down.

THE BENEFITS OF THE OASIS NETWORK:

- It provides a fun, supportive fostering community, which is a safe place to share the challenges of fostering and provides children with a network of other children.
- It supports placements by providing regular respite or ‘sleepovers’ for the children with the Oasis carer, who is already known to them.
- It provides somewhere for the child to go if there is an emergency, or a reflective space for the child to ‘cool off’ if they have fallen out with their main carer. This ‘breathing space’ enables reparation work to take place, preventing their placement from breaking down.
- It provides responsive peer support outside of office hours from someone who knows the child and foster family.

It provides a whole community around each child enhancing safeguarding. “As new carers we have been really lucky to join the Oasis Network from the beginning of our fostering career. We have an experienced Oasis Carer in Sue who is always available for advice and support, particularly if you don’t want to bother your SSW. The monthly meetings have allowed me as main carer to build up relationships with the other carers who are now like my new work colleagues.”

WHY BECOME AN OASIS CARER?

If you are someone who wants to 'do more' in fostering, or who enjoys mentoring new carers, or feels that they have experience and can share advice or support other carers, this could be the perfect role for you.

The role comes with training and support, a fee of £20,000 (plus fees and allowances for all respite care offered) providing income security with regular monthly payments.

You will continue to have 28 days annual leave. In addition, you will have one weekend off per month and one day off a week.

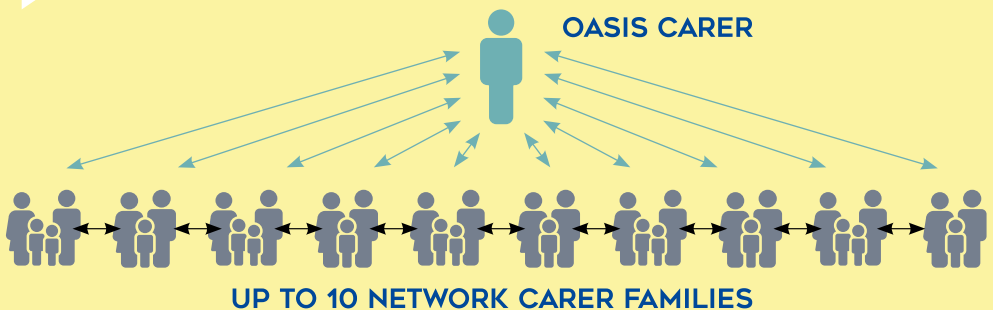
You will receive support in your role from a dedicated Supervising Social Worker and from the wider Oasis Network community within Essex.

"We have found our role as Oasis carers hugely rewarding. Building relationships with carers and their foster children, offering support for carers and providing regular sleepovers for the children. We have become a team, a team we feel privileged to be part of!"

Susan and Angus Neale, Oasis carers

TO BE AN OASIS CARER YOU NEED TO:

- Enjoy providing children with respite (sleepover) care – very important!
- Enjoy communicating positively with adults as well as children.
- Have previous experience as a foster carer.
- Be able to provide placements for children aged 0–18 years.
- Have at least two spare bedrooms and ideally no other CIC living in the home.
- Be very organized in order to manage all the sleepovers as well as organizing Oasis Network events.
- Have both carers involved, if you foster as a couple.
- Have lots of energy and the capacity to welcome a whole new network of foster families into your lives.
- Be flexible and confident enough to provide support to other foster carers outside of office hours.
- Have good personal boundaries and the ability to know when you need support or advice.



WHY BECOME A NETWORK CARER?

If you are a new carer, if you would like to be part of a vibrant support network and friendship group, if you are new to your area, if you have children you would like support with, if you would like your children to have regular sleepovers with someone you and they know and trust... the Oasis Network could be ideal for you.

To be part of an Oasis Network as a Network carer, you will:

- need the capacity in your life to become part of a vibrant community of foster carers.
- need to attend Oasis Network meetings and social events.
- need to make use of the 'sleepovers' provided by the Oasis carer.

"We are able to share experiences, bounce off ideas and support each other. The organised social events have allowed all the cared for children to come together and share happy times just like an extended family."

"We can't imagine fostering without this support. It's been totally brilliant."

**Jenny and Tim Townsend,
Network carers.**

This information is issued by:

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