Frequently Asked Questions on the MSF Fostering Scheme

General information on the Fostering scheme

1. Who are the children who require foster care?

Children who require foster care may have been abused or neglected, or are unable to be cared for by their parents who may be ill, incarcerated or have passed away. As a foster parent, the love and care you provide to these children in a family environment will be vital to their healing, growth and development.

2. What is the difference between fostering and adoption?

Fostering is a temporary care arrangement and our ultimate goal is to reunite the child with their natural family. Foster children remain the legal children of their natural parents. Adoption, on the other hand, is a legal process where an adopted child assumes the rights of a natural child of the adoptive family.

3. Can I adopt my foster child?

Fostering is a temporary care arrangement and our ultimate goal is to reunite the child with their natural family. Foster children remain the legal children of their natural parents. In the rare event that a foster child has been abandoned or his/ her natural parents cannot be found, the foster parents may adopt the child if they meet the necessary criteria.

4. How long does a foster child usually stay with a foster family?

Fostering is a temporary care arrangement and our ultimate goal is to reunite the child with their natural family. Where this has not been possible, there have been instances where the foster child has stayed on with the foster parents on a longer term basis. In all these considerations, the best interest of the child is the utmost priority.

Application Eligibility and Process

5. I am not sure if I qualify to be a foster parent. What are the criteria?

Foster parents come from all walks of life. What is important is the heart for vulnerable children. All applications will undergo assessment to ascertain if applicants are able to meet the needs of these children. Generally, the criteria below apply as a guide:

- Resident of Singapore
- Preferably be married
- At least 25 years old
- Medically fit to care for children
- Minimum monthly household income of S$2,000
- Attained at least secondary school education
- Experience in caring for children and/or with strong parenting skills
- Willing to ensure a child-safe home environment
- Not a recipient of the Public Assistance Scheme
- Not be dependent on the fostering allowance as a main source of income
6. What supporting documents do I need to submit together with my application form?

1) Copy of NRIC/Employment Pass/Dependent Pass of Male and Female Applicants
2) Copy of Birth Certificate/NRIC/Dependent Pass of Immediate and Household Family Members (including tenants and domestic helpers).
3) Copy of latest Payslip of main income earner. Employment Letter/Income Tax Return Form may be provided if payslip is unavailable.
4) Copy of Applicant’s Bank Passbook (front page with name and account number). Bank statement may be provided if passbook is unavailable.
5) 1 Coloured Passport-size Photograph of Applicant
6) 2 Referees – please use template provided

7. I am an expatriate. Can I apply to be a foster parent?

Yes. As we would like to minimise disruption to a child’s stay with the foster family as much as possible, expatriates who apply to be a foster parent should be set to remain in Singapore for a minimum of 3 years.

8. Can working mothers apply to be a foster parent?

Yes, there are a few foster families who are dual-income working couples. A couple can register the foster child with a childcare centre during their working hours if they do not have other childcare alternatives. Foster families can also enjoy childcare subsidies for their foster child.

9. I have applied to be a foster parent. How long do I have to wait before I know the results?

As the safety and well-being of these children are highly important, there is a need for all applicants to undergo an assessment process which includes interview sessions and home visits. You will know the results of your application within 6 to 8 weeks.

10. Is it necessary for all foster parents to have window grilles at home?

Installing window grilles at home is one of our safety requirements if you are caring for foster children up to 12 years of age. If there are no window grilles and you are not able to install any, MSF will only be able to place infants or youths above the age of 12 with you.

11. Can I choose which child I want to foster?

You may indicate your preference on the gender and age of the child you would like to foster, and we will do our best to match you to a child, depending on his/her needs, and your ability to care for him/her. There is currently a need for more foster parents who are able to care for children who are of primary school age and older.
12. How do I apply to become a foster parent?

Please complete the Fostering Application Form and we will get in touch with you once your form has been received.

a) Scan and email the completed copy to gracehaven_fostering@smm.salvationarmy.org or
b) Mail the completed copy to

Gracehaven Fostering
3 Lorong Napiri
Singapore 547528

Being a Foster Parent

13. What do foster parents do?

Children are placed in foster care when they are no longer able to stay safely with their own natural families or kin. Children placed on MSF’s fostering scheme require a safe, stable and nurturing home environment to grow and fulfil their potential. Foster parents provide loving homes for these children and give them the care that will help them heal and grow. By being a foster parent, you will be providing a loving and caring family environment for vulnerable children in need of care. Foster parents can make a very positive impact on the lives of these children.

14. What will be expected of me as a foster parent?

Our foster children have needs like any other children. They need love, shelter, food, education, security and an opportunity to play and interact with other children. As such, you must be committed to ensure that these needs are met. Qualities that make good parenting such as patience, understanding, perseverance and firmness, will help to create a good foster care relationship with the child.

As some children have been hurt by abuse or neglect, they may have more needs and thus require special attention in terms of coping with their feelings. Your patience, care and attention will help the child to cope and in time, heal and overcome their difficulties.

15. Is there a limit to the number of foster children I can take on or the number of years I can be a foster parent?

It depends on the living space in your home and personal capacity to care for all the children in your home. You can foster as many children and for as long as possible if you are medically fit and are assessed by MSF to be capable in meeting the needs of the children.

In fact, we have been inspired by foster parents who have been fostering children for more than 20 years! We also have foster parents who are grandparents caring for their own grandchildren as well as their foster children.

What is important is the foster parent’s dedication and desire to care for these vulnerable children, and we hope more people will open up their homes to care for these children.
16. Can my foster child travel with my family overseas?

Travel consent is subject to the approval of the natural parents. Should consent not be granted, the foster child will be placed in the care of another MSF-registered foster family or MSF-approved respite carer for the duration.

17. I spank my children if they misbehave. Can I spank my foster child too, since I am caring for them?

Physical punishment for foster children is not condoned. Instead, using positive parenting techniques such as setting boundaries, explaining consequences, time-out sessions and removing privileges will encourage good behaviour with the child.

If you have trouble coping with the behaviours of the foster child, our Foster Care Officer can work with you to resolve any issues that the foster child may be presenting.

18. What if I can’t cope with the behaviours of a foster child or if the foster child cannot fit into my family?

Such changes are disruptive to the children. Before placement, MSF officers would normally work with the foster parents to assess if the placement of a particular child is a good fit. If there are issues, MSF officers will work closely with the child and the foster family to try and resolve any issues which arise. If needed, other professional services such as counselling or psychological assessments and interventions will also be provided. If all else fails however, alternative care arrangements assessed to be the best option will be made for the child.

19. How do I help a foster child who might be traumatised or who may have emotional problems?

Being patient and caring is very important when helping such children. Training on topics such as helping children with trauma and attachment issues, or with emotional and behavioural needs will be provided for foster parents. If a child requires professional help, their Child Protection Officer can refer them to a psychologist or counsellor at MSF or at a social service agency.

20. What if I love my foster child too much to let go?

Letting go of the child you have cared for is one of the hardest parts of being foster parents, and it is understandable if you feel sad when your foster child has to return home. However, knowing that your foster child is now able to return to his or her natural home and live with his or her natural family is definitely a cause for joy! This is especially so when you know you have contributed to the reuniting of this family and child.

Support from Gracehaven Fostering

21. What services and support will I receive as a foster parent with Gracehaven Fostering?

A Foster Care Officer will work closely with you to provide guidance and support, so that you can be the best possible foster parent to the child placed with you. Besides financial support such as monthly fostering allowance, child care subsidies, and exemption of medical fees, there will also
be on-going training, support group sessions, respite care and 24-hour emergency support and crisis hotline.

**22. How does Gracehaven Fostering help the foster child make the transition when returning to his or her natural parents?**

The foster parents' help is often enlisted to support the child through the process of reintegration with his/her natural parents. The Child Protection Officer together with the foster parents will prepare the child and help the child to understand the move back to his or her natural parents. Access time with natural parents is introduced gradually to check on the readiness of both natural parents and the child before plans for reintegration can be made. Once it is assessed that it is safe for the child to return to the natural parents, the child is allowed to return home under the close supervision of Child Protective Service. The CPO would also continue to make unannounced surprise visits to check on the level of care provided by the natural parents and to ensure the safety of the child.

**How to Reach Us**

**23. How do I find out more information about the scheme?**

If you have any queries, or are interested to find out more about our Fostering Scheme, please call and speak to our friendly staff at 6580 2285 or email us at gracehaven_fostering@smm.salvationarmy.org.