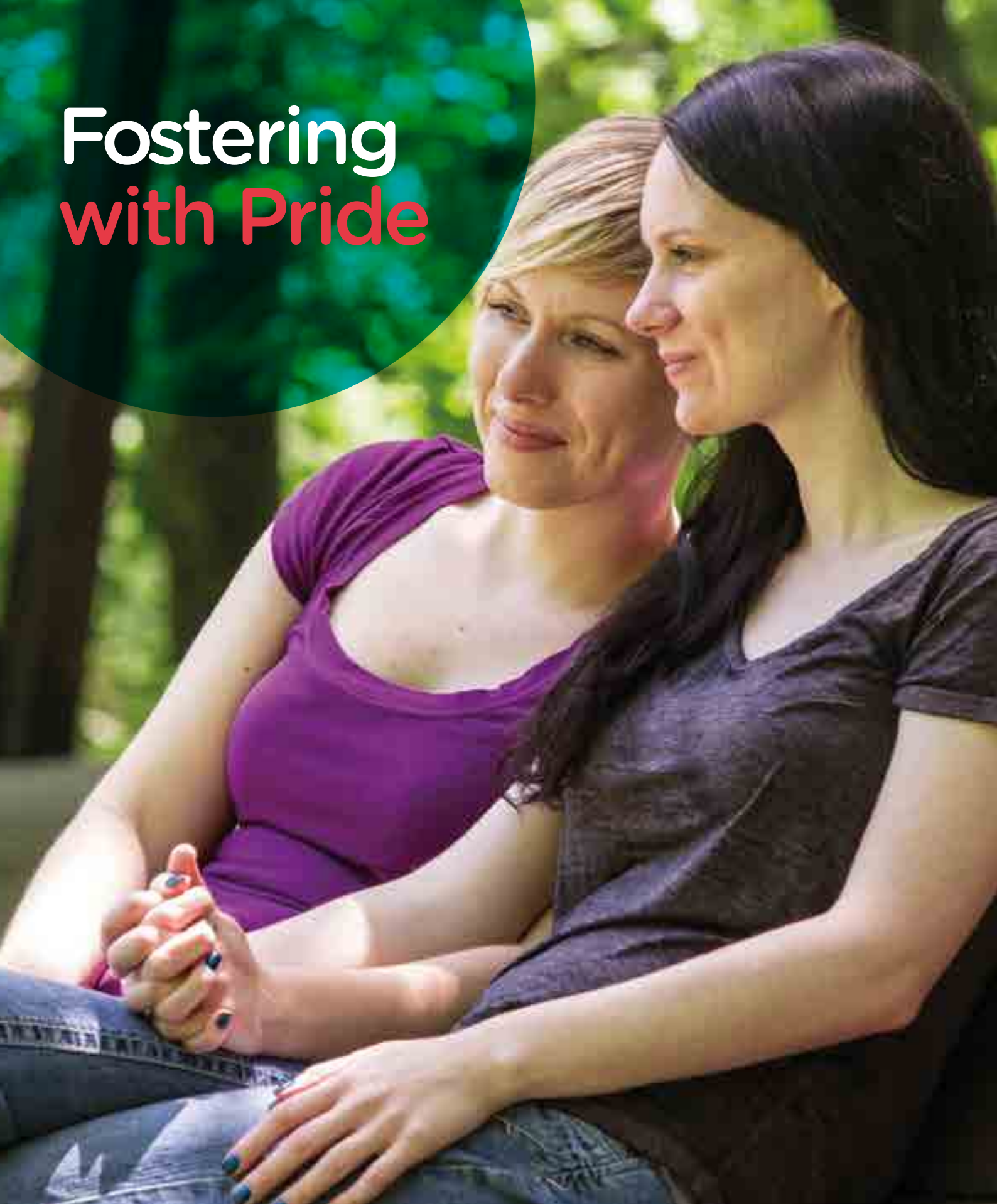


# Fostering with Pride



**keyassets**

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROVIDER

## Investors In People

In 2011 Core Assets, the parent company of Key Assets, received silver recognition as an Investors in People accredited organisation, demonstrating our commitment to delivering business improvement through people. We pride ourselves on the quality of support we provide to our staff at all levels.



## Stonewall

Stonewall works with a range of agencies to address the needs of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in the wider community. As a member of Stonewall's Diversity Champion Programme, Core Assets is one of over 300 organisations to join the organisations good practice forum for sexual orientation, where employers can work with Stonewall to promote diversity in the workplace.



## 360 Diversity

360 Diversity is an integrated forum and news repository which provides the platform for Core Assets to champion all strands of diversity, support our staff and facilitate effective communication at all levels. Using 360 Diversity, Core Assets holds staff forums for age, disability, gender, race and ethnicity, religion and belief and sexual orientation.



"This booklet is aimed at LGB people as it focuses on sexual orientation as opposed to gender. We are an inclusive organisation and welcome carers from all communities including transgender, embracing diversity in our workforce and in our recruitment and selection practices."



# foreword

**by Estella Abraham**  
**Executive Director**

**"If you're reading this, I guess you are doing so either out of curiosity or you're seriously considering becoming a foster carer. Whatever the reason I am sure you'll find this leaflet informative."**

"Looking after someone else's child is no easy task. Year on year we require more people to take up the challenge and help us to make a positive and lasting difference to children placed in our care.

We strive to be representative of the communities of people in our society and this includes non-heterosexual individuals or couples. Fictional drama and soap operas don't always depict fostering in its true light and sometimes it appears that prejudices exist. At Key Assets this isn't the case - everyone is treated equally.

At any stage of the process we can put you in touch with one of our registered LGB carers or employees to talk through the highs and lows, challenges and rewards of fostering.

The Core Assets Group, of which Key Assets is part, is the only non-government provider of fostering in the Stonewall Top 100 Employers. We are about quality care in a family setting and equality for all. No one has the right to foster but everyone has the opportunity to apply and I hope we hear from you."





# about fostering with Key Assets

## what is fostering?

Fostering is a way of providing family life for someone else's child in your own home when they are unable to live with their birth family. This can be due to many reasons; illness, relationship problems, family breakdown or perhaps a situation where the child's welfare is threatened. Unlike adoption, the child remains the legal responsibility of the relevant government child protection services and/or their birth parents. Foster carers provide a safe, secure and stable environment for these children and young people and in some cases will work towards reuniting the child with their birth family.

## why do children come into care?

Many children who need a new family have experienced some degree of neglect and/or physical, emotional or sexual abuse and all of them will have experienced loss and separation from their birth family. Even if the children present as happy and smiling, their past experiences will have an effect on their behaviour and development.

## could fostering be an option for you?

Fostering can be a challenging, but also extremely rewarding career. Being able to foster isn't about whether you are single, married or cohabiting, your sexuality, your ethnicity, whether you already have children or what your religious beliefs are. It's about the desire to make a positive and lasting difference to a child who needs support. It helps if you have previous fostering or child care experience, but more important is your personality, enthusiasm and your willingness to make a full time commitment to fostering.



“WHAT WAS GOOD ABOUT THE AGENCY WAS THAT BEING A SAME SEX COUPLE WAS NEVER AN ISSUE.”



## mark & dave's story

“Before coming into fostering we discussed it with our families and started to think about what we had to offer a child. As well as finding our lifestyles had gradually changed over time, a lot of our friends were having children and we were proud godfathers and uncles to nieces and nephews so it felt like a natural movement. We were well aware that there were plenty of children in difficult circumstances who needed help and support and a loving family home. Our friends and family were very supportive and actively encouraged us throughout the process.”

“Mark initially started to do some research on the internet and, after typing ‘fostering’ into Google, he found Key Assets.

The staff at the agency were very supportive and quick to answer all of our questions. What was good about the agency was that being a same sex couple was never an issue. We have been treated with total support and equality from day one. Everyone we have dealt with, from support workers to social workers, have all been fully supportive in what we do.

We also have a lot of support from Dave's family, as well as a lesbian friend who is now approved to baby-sit for us on the odd time we want to go out to dinner or catch up with friends. Our eight year old boy, who is currently in placement, is very fond of her.

Since we first started fostering, most of the reactions from people at school have been very positive and our relationship has never been an issue. Sometimes it has been quite funny to see the reactions

of other parents at the football matches. Usually they are not sure what to think and avoid the questions of who is who and deal with it well.

The young people we have fostered, 21 in total, have been amazing. The older teenagers at first find it a bit daunting but once they meet us, any reservations about being placed with a same sex couple soon vanish. At present, we also offer respite once a month for a 16 year old; he is great and gets along really well with us and our other foster son.

Naturally some birth parents are shocked, especially those who originally come from countries where being homosexual is illegal and it can be quite a challenging position for the birth parents to find themselves in. Sometimes they look for failures in our care to their children, but these occasions are quite rare and most are in fact not because they are homophobic but because they are upset that they have lost the right to look after their own children.

We would advise any LGB single person or couple who are considering fostering to take each day as it comes and remember that you are matched carefully with the needs of the child or young person. Each child is an individual with different needs and we feel that we offer consistency and effective boundaries to facilitate a normal upbringing. We are totally honest and ensure that the children we look after are aware of our expectations.”

# fully supported

## We provide the following package to all our foster carers:

- › Support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- › Frequent visits and regular telephone contact from a qualified and suitably experienced Key Assets supervising social worker.
- › Up to 14 nights a year supportive paid respite (respite involves a child you are caring for going to stay with another foster carer so that both you and the child can have a break).
- › Regular support group meetings with other foster carers to share experiences and knowledge.
- › Organised activities for you, your family and the children you look after.
- › A comprehensive pre and post approval/authorisation training programme.
- › Fostering allowances which are provided to cover the costs of caring for a child.



## the importance of having LGB carers

Carers from all walks of life, backgrounds and sexual orientations are needed to reflect the diverse communities in which we live. Having as large a pool of foster carers as possible ensures we are able to match the right carers with the right child. It is important to Key Assets to recruit carers from diverse backgrounds as this provides young people with positive role models and helps reduce stigma and prejudice.

There are a number of circumstances where children in foster care may benefit from being looked after by an LGB carer.

If a child has come from a birth family where the parents or extended family are lesbian, gay or bisexual, LGB carers may offer a consistent or familiar environment.

Children who come into care will have experienced a variety of difficulties and LGB carers may have had their own challenges enabling them to understand the loss, anxiety and uncertainty a young person may feel. A child or young person may feel safer living with carers who are the same gender because of past experiences.

A child fostered by LGB carers may be more confident in championing social justice and if a looked after child or young person is LGB themselves, they need support and guidance as any other child does.



“  
AS FOSTER  
CARERS WE AIM  
TO PROVIDE A SAFE  
AND HAPPY HOME  
ENVIRONMENT FOR  
FOSTER CHILDREN.  
”

## crystal and katie's story

Crystal (35) and Katie (27) are a foster carer couple who began fostering nearly three years ago and haven't looked back since.

Crystal explains: "Being a foster carer isn't always easy but when you see a child grow and improve at something you have helped them with, it makes all the hard work worthwhile. Teaching a child right from wrong is one part of our role and when you actually begin to see them listen and act upon your advice, you feel you have made positive strides forward."

"We are no different from other foster carers when it comes to challenges in fostering. Challenges can come from the child or young person who may harbour complex emotional issues or they can come from simple tasks like getting permission for haircuts, school trips or an overnight stay at a friend's house."

The couple enjoy a happy and active home life with their four cats Tinker, KaCi, Tigra and Tiza. They met 10 years ago and became official civil partners in 2006.

"Being a same sex couple we still have some negative opinions to overcome. We are in the minority and it isn't always easy. On a recent sign language course, we were set individual tasks of signing a sentence. When I signed Katie is my wife, I was corrected to say Katie is my sister, since this is what they assumed I was trying to sign. There were a few red faces that day," Crystal jokes.

We have to be prepared for what other people's preconceived ideas are of us before they have even met us and that can be tricky."

Crystal and Katie have pursued their fostering careers with determination and commitment. Working with the agency they have the full backing from professionals who are always on hand to offer guidance and advice, day or night. Ongoing training for carers is all part and parcel the fostering service provides.

Katie explains how training and support has helped keep them on track: "This is a great agency to work with and the many training sessions we have attended have helped to improve our fostering skills and understanding of the emotional or behavioural problems foster children can sometimes display. We attend training depending on the young person we are looking after and what we feel relates to their needs. Key Assets also holds local foster carer support groups and we meet up regularly with other carers to share experiences and chat about our day to day lives as foster carers."

"Anyone who is considering becoming a foster carer needs to have bags of patience. It can be a long path before it gets easier, but it does. Sometimes it can feel that you have tried everything and that it doesn't seem to be working but if you commit and be consistent and show the child or young person that you are going to stick by them, then eventually you will start to see those little signs of improvement."

Katie concludes: "As foster carers we aim to provide a safe and happy home environment for foster children and it is that level of stability which is so important to a child's wellbeing. At Key Assets Fostering the aim is to deliver quality care in a family setting and that is exactly what we intend to do."

# what next?

If you would like to take the next step towards becoming a foster carer, then contact us at:

**FREEPHONE**

**0800 525437**

**[www.keyassets.co.nz](http://www.keyassets.co.nz)**

---

**Key Assets New Zealand  
National Office**

5/17 Lambie Drive  
Manukau  
Auckland 2024

PO Box 76532  
Manukau  
Auckland 2024

T: 09 263 5151



**Or call WAYNE on 021 875583  
for an informal chat about fostering**



**keyassets**

THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROVIDER

Key Assets is part of the Core Assets Group