

Ukraine Better Care Scope of Work

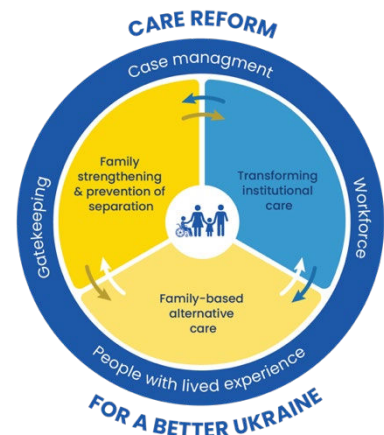
Consultancy Title: Specialized Foster Care Expert
Location: Home-based
Duration: Immediate for 6 months, with possibility of extension
Number of days: Approximately 50% FTE, 10 days per month, negotiable
Reports to: Mari Hickmann, Maestral International Project Director
Works with: Maestral International Project Director and Associates, Senior Manager, and Project Manager; Hope and Homes for Children Ukraine

Background

Ukraine's Better Care Initiative provides safe, nurturing family care for all children. Recognizing the profound impact of war on all of Ukraine's 7.5 million children, the initiative addresses the rise in child poverty, trauma, and risks of violence, abuse and family separation. The initiative underscores the social and economic benefits of protecting children from adversities and contributing to their holistic development.

The Government of Ukraine and its partners, including UNICEF Ukraine, are reforming how children are cared for in Ukraine by:

1. Strengthening families through integrated social services.
2. Promoting family-based alternative care for children without parental care.
3. Reintegrating children living in institutions into family care, and transforming or closing residential institutions for children.



Maestral International is supported by UNICEF Ukraine to work with partners, including governmental and non-governmental actors, to realise these aims. By supporting actors to strengthen local systems, Maestral is specifically focused on supporting the following:

1. Integrated social services and alternative family care
2. Financial resourcing
3. Technical assistance, M&E, and learning

Under Technical Area 1, Maestral is supported by UNICEF Ukraine to strengthen care reform processes and alternative family care in Ukraine. This effort includes support to specialized care for children with disabilities. Given 19% of children in institutions are children with disabilities, UNICEF and partners aim to develop a full cycle of creating and piloting specialized foster families for children with disabilities.

In this context, Maestral is seeking a senior-level expert with technical expertise in specialized foster care to work directly with UNICEF implementing partner Hope and Homes in the development of the specialized foster care programme. In addition, the expert will work closely with the Maestral Better Care team on tasks related to Technical Area 1 on care reform.

About Maestral International

Maestral International (<http://maestral.org/>), is a team of globally recognized technical experts supporting the development, strengthening, and coordination of child protection systems to ensure children live free from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Our mission is to ensure that all children, especially those most excluded and marginalized, are prioritized and cared for in safe and nurturing families and communities. Maestral's approach emphasizes the importance of a protective environment as a critical component of strengthening health, education, economic development, and human capital development.

Maestral has worked globally to increase the quality and quantity of family-based care options for children, and thus decrease reliance on residential care. We take an approach to securing and sustaining a child protection system that prioritizes family care for all children and strengthens the capacity of families, caregivers, and the system to do so.

Scope of the consultancy

The Specialized Foster Care Expert will be part of the Project Team and will work in close coordination with the Project Director, Maestral team members and associates, UNICEF Ukraine, Government and non-governmental stakeholders, and other experts. Moreover, the expert will work closely with UNICEF implementing partner Hope and Homes for Children Ukraine.

Key Functions and Objectives:

1. Provision of technical guidance, based on international best practices, to support the creation, piloting, legalization and standardization of specialized foster families for children with disabilities in Ukraine.

In particular, to develop, pilot, and refine:

- Minimum standards, standard operating procedures, and tools for creating and supporting specialized foster families;
- Strategies to identify, recruit, screen, train, and assess prospective specialised foster parents in three regions of Ukraine (Volyn, Dnipro, Kyiv);
- Capacity strengthening tools and approaches to build specialised foster parents' competence in providing tailored care to children with disabilities;
- Matching tools and protocols, which uphold the principles of suitability, participation, and the best interests of the child

- Tools and approaches for preparing the child and foster family for placement;
 - Tools and approaches for individual case plans, including comprehensive, multisectoral support for specialized foster families and children in their care (e.g. home visits, financial benefits, respite care, referral protocols, etc.)
 - Tools and protocols for facilitating contact with birth families, where in the best interests of the child.
 - Tools and protocols for permanency planning and transition support.
2. Support the learning, documentation and quality assurance of the project
- Conduct events or develop documents to share successful experience in creating and supporting specialized foster families for children with disabilities
 - Provide training (and training of trainers) on international standards, guidance and best practices for specialised foster care for children with disabilities
 - Provide coaching and mentoring, and learning exchanges for the Hope and Homes for Children project team
 - Document implementation, working with Hope and Homes for Children to capture key lessons learned for project correction and reporting, and to support future scaling
 - Support online and in-person events to share learnings from the project
 - Review drafts of work of others involved in the pilot programme and provide technical feedback to ensure international standards and best practices
3. Provide additional technical support, as requested and available, and potentially hand-in-hand with other subject matter technical experts. This may include supporting technical work in the following
- Integrated social services and benefits and alternative family care
 - Strengthening of the social service sector workforce
 - Transformation of institutions

Qualifications

- At least 6 years of experience developing or supporting specialized foster care programmes, including in Europe.
- At least 3 years of experience in care reform in general.
- At least 3 years of experience in other forms of family-based alternative care, child protection system strengthening, or a related area.
- Senior-level technical knowledge of international best practices in creating and supporting specialized foster families for children with disabilities (identification, recruitment, screening, training, assessment, matching, placement, multisectoral support, monitoring, case review, exit planning).

- Experience in developing and delivering capacity strengthening (training, supportive supervision, coaching, mentoring, facilitating peer-to-peer learning exchanges, etc.) frontline practitioners, managers, and authorities who establish and support specialised foster care.
- Experience developing practice standards, tools, and guidance related to foster care.
- Experience advising or implementing care reform in the region.
- Experience working on multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural and multi-lingual teams.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to check and respond to emails within 24-hours.
- Experience in fast-paced working environments.
- Knowledge of the context in Ukraine, other Eastern European child protection systems, or another humanitarian setting a plus.
- Fluent in English; Ukrainian is not required.

Questions or clarifications about the position can be directed to vschroepel@maestral.org.

Interested candidates should submit a Cover Letter and CV to vschroepel@maestral.org by **June 13, 2025**.