

Becoming a Foster Carer in Haringey



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Thank you for making an enquiry to the fostering service in Haringey.

Becoming a foster carer is a huge decision, and one that you have probably been thinking about for a long time. We want to make sure that you have as much information as possible at this early stage so that you can make the decisions that are right for you. We are here to answer all your questions and make sure you get all the help you need.

This is the first step in a hugely rewarding career in foster care, where you will get the chance to change the course of young people's lives. Our foster carers ensure that children are supported and kept safe, through what is often an extremely difficult time. There are few greater rewards than being able to provide those children who have often missed out on the things that most of us experience with a positive and secure childhood.

We hope that this pack provides you with information that will help you on your journey to becoming a foster carer. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you want to discuss anything further.

"Fostering is the most rewarding experience, we've loved every moment of it."

**ALEXANDER AND JAMES,
FOSTER CARERS**



Who can become a foster carer?

There is no typical foster carer. Applications are welcome from people of all types of backgrounds. We look for patience, energy and a desire to work with children and social work professionals to achieve amazing things with the child or children in your care.

We do not expect you to have any particular qualifications, but what we do expect is that you have a real interest in caring for children and young people, space in your home and time in your life to foster a child or young person.

The only absolute requirement is that you have to be over 21 years old and not committed a crime against a child.

Why do children come into care?

Children come into foster care because they cannot remain with their birth parents. This can be for a variety of reasons, including:

- Parental illness or mental health issues
- Parental drug or alcohol misuse
- Neglect or abuse
- Extreme family conflict
- Parents without support from family or friends who need help in an emergency
- Parents of children with disabilities needing a planned short break from caring for their child

Wherever we can, we try to keep families together. Where this isn't possible, we rely on foster carers to provide children with a safe, happy and supportive home so that they can enjoy a stable and secure life.



"I have enjoyed being a foster carer, it's such a good experience."

JANET, FOSTER CARER

What do foster carers do?

As a foster carer, you will provide a loving and caring home for local children who cannot live with their family. This means that you will look after a child in your own home, but that child will usually remain the legal responsibility of either their birth parents or the local authority.

Leaving family can be a traumatic experience for children, which means your support will be pivotal in helping them maintain a healthy and vibrant childhood. Children need stimulation, support and a secure environment to help them understand why they are living away from home. As a Haringey foster carer, you'll have patience, resilience, compassion, empathy and an ability to communicate effectively with children and the professionals supporting you in being a foster carer. You'll support foster children with their education, health and leisure needs. You will be given support from our Virtual School and Looked-After Children's Health Team to do this.

Children living in Haringey come from a wide range of backgrounds and foster carers should be prepared to support foster children in their cultural and religious beliefs. As part of your assessment we'll discuss both this and the age range of children that you feel would best fit into your family.

As a foster carer you will form professional relationships with social workers, teachers, health professionals, therapeutic services and parents and family members of the child in your care. We work together to ensure that information about our looked-after children is shared, allowing their needs to be met as effectively as possible. As part of your role as a foster carer you will keep written records of your foster placements, allowing us to monitor the kind of support needed by you and the children in your care.

"I'm really pleased I made the decision to become a foster carer and would urge anyone who is thinking about it to give it a go."

JAN, FOSTER CARER



Types of Fostering

There are many types of fostering that you can choose to specialise in. It is important to explore which type of fostering most suits you and your family.

Emergency Foster Care

This type of fostering is unplanned and used at short notice, for example, if a lone parent is taken into hospital and there is no one to care for their child. Longer-term plans must then be considered. Emergency foster carers will need to be prepared to take a child into their home at any time of the night or day and have them stay for a few days.

Short-Term Foster Care

Short-term foster carers provide a temporary place to stay until the child can return home to their own family or a longer-term fostering placement or adoption arrangement can be made. This type of placement can last a few days to several years.

Short-term foster carers look after a child for a period of time, often whilst court proceedings are in process to determine whether it is suitable for the child to return home. This may involve parents or other family members undergoing assessments about whether they are able to provide safe and consistent care to the child. In other cases, parents voluntarily agree to their children being in care. In all cases we work in partnership with parents. At the end of the placement children are likely to return home or be placed with other family members, or with long-term foster carers or adopters. Being a short-term foster carer can be rewarding as foster carers play a key role in helping children through difficult times.

Long-Term Foster Care

Where it has been decided that a child cannot return home and adoption is not possible, we may choose a long-term foster placement for a child. Long-term fostering allows children and young people to stay in a family where they can feel secure, often while maintaining contact with their birth family.

They will remain there until they are at least 18 years, unless a 'Staying Put' arrangement has been considered, then they can remain with foster carers until they reach the age of 21. When young people remain beyond 18 this is an arrangement that is mutually agreed between all parties, including young people and foster carers, and financial payments to the foster carers continue. This enables children to thrive in a stable home and for foster carers to develop strong, rewarding relationships with children and young people on a more permanent basis and to prepare them to live independently.

Parent and Child Foster Care

These placements are time-limited and are specifically for a young parent and their child. Parent and child foster carers will support a new parent and their child in their own home. Foster carers will help the young parent adapt to their new situation of having a baby and help them to develop their parenting skills. Foster carers will need an understanding and knowledge of child development, as well as the ability to create a positive and secure relationship between the parent and child.

This type of placement offers stability and consistency in a family environment, whilst assessments are taking place. We have a specialist allowance for our parent and child fostering scheme, which we run together with our other North London Fostering Consortium members. This involves foster carers contributing to the assessment of the parent. We also have regular parent and child fostering. If you are interested in this type of fostering, please ask us about the scheme.

Teenage Fostering

The teenage years are when most young people are finding their feet, and the focus of the foster carer's role will be different to that of the carer for younger children. A strong emphasis will be on supporting the young person to make sense of their past experiences, make important decisions about their future, and develop life skills that will be useful to them in their adult lives. The relationship you develop with a young person as their foster carer will be crucial in ensuring they receive encouragement, positive guidance and advice in order to develop confidence to achieve their goals.

Respite Foster Care

Respite foster care is set up to give parents and foster carers a break from the caring responsibilities of their child. This can last up to 14 days and will sometimes occur a few times a year. This can be to provide a break to a foster carer who is currently caring for a child or it can allow a struggling family some time to be assisted with support services so that children can return to a more supported and stable family environment. As a respite carer you would work in partnership with birth parents and short or long-term carers to provide weekend, holiday or support care on a regular, one off or intermittent basis, depending on the plans for the child. Respite care is about looking after a child to support the birth family or foster carers.

Short Break Foster Care

Short break foster care gives families who have a child with a disability a break from caring for their child. This can be a very positive experience for the child as they are able to form new and ongoing relationships with their short breaks carers and be involved in new experiences and activities with their foster family. This care can be varied and includes day care, overnight and weekend care on an agreed basis.



Who needs fostering?

Babies and toddlers

Babies and toddlers usually need short-term homes while they're at their most vulnerable. They may return to their birth family or live with you while they are waiting to be adopted.

Young children aged 4 – 12

This is a crucial time in a child's life. They need stability and routine, as well as help settling into school and building friendships.

Teenagers

Teenagers need stability, as well as clear boundaries and advice. They need the space to learn and make mistakes as they prepare for independent living. You'll play a significant part in their educational achievements, sharing in their success.

Sibling groups

Where possible, we try to keep brothers and sisters together. We therefore need foster carers who are able to look after siblings. We can offer extensive additional support to help you with this.

Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities can be harder to place, as they often will need specific care and more attention. Carers with a background of looking after children with similar needs is an advantage, but by no means a necessity.



Working with birth parents

Contact is the process by which children and young people in care remain in touch with their birth families and significant other people. It can include e-mails, telephone calls, text messages, social networking sites, letters, visits and overnight stays. Contact may be with parents or other adults known to the child, but can also be with siblings who are in other placements or with significant others. Any arrangements will have been agreed in the child's care plan, which is regularly reviewed in case anything needs to change.

Except where it is not deemed to be in the child's best interests, parents have a right to be involved in their children's lives. For the children, their parents are important people, whatever their circumstances. Along with other professionals, foster carers must work to the agreed Care Plan; if it is to work towards rehabilitation, this will mean using contact sessions to help the parents develop the skills to adequately care for their children. We offer training to foster carers in managing contact. Contact can be supervised or unsupervised, depending on the need, age and plan for the child. The arrangements for a child's contact may undergo changes over time.



Why foster with Haringey?

We will provide you with:

- Foster carers are paid fees and allowances to enable them to accommodate children in their home
- Free training beforehand to help you prepare to be a foster carer.
- A dedicated supervising social worker from the fostering team who will meet with you regularly and stay in telephone and email contact, to provide you with ongoing support.
- We have close links with our local CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) who provide consultation, advice and therapeutic support to children. There are also a number of other specialised services within Haringey with whom we have close links.
- Membership of Haringey Foster Carers Association which is run by foster carers, for foster carers
- Ongoing training opportunities once you are approved to build on your skills
- Access to regular support groups
- Membership of the Fostering Network, an independent national charity which offers a host of benefits which include: subscription to Foster Care magazine, monthly newsletters, access to online resources, 24 hour dedicated helpline, expert legal assistance, advice on tax, national insurance and benefits, exclusive financial advice on mortgages and pensions, training and regular events.
- Resources in supporting children's education with support from our Virtual School.
- As members of the North London Fostering Consortium, our foster carers also have access to training hosted by Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney and Islington.
- Refer a friend scheme – we will award our existing foster carers £500 per successful approved friend they refer. There is no limit to how many people referred

- Yearly foster carers appreciation evening
In addition to all the above, all foster carers receive an allowance to look after the children in their care. They also receive a fee to recognise the skills they offer to the child or young person and for the ongoing training they attend to maintain those skills. When a child is placed with a foster carer, payment is made directly into the carer's bank account. Fostering allowances mean that carers have the necessary funds to care for children plus a fee as a financial reward for themselves. Foster carers are not employed by Haringey Council and are required to register as self-employed with HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs). If in receipt of benefits, they can still receive a fostering allowance which will not affect benefit claims.

There is guidance on taxation and benefits on the government website: www.gov.uk/foster-carers/claiming-benefits-while-fostering and the Fostering Network website: www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/finances/tax-and-national-insurance

"I know that my social worker is always there for me."

JANET, FOSTER CARER

Below is the breakdown of basic weekly elements for a foster carer's role.

Tier 1

Foster carers reward element = £192 (Under 11) £205 (11+)

Child's Allowance = £185 (Under 11) £232 (11+)

Tier 2

As above carer's element plus £25 per week.

Tier 3

Dependant on complexity and nature of the placement.

First steps to becoming a foster carer

Contact us

You can call us to ask further questions about fostering and we will help you to consider how fostering will impact on your life and the changes you may need to make. We will ask you about your reasons for considering fostering, your previous experience and the room you have available in your home.

We run regular information sessions that we encourage enquirers to attend. There you will have the opportunity to discuss fostering topics with one of our foster carers and a fostering team member. We will take an initial enquiry from you over the telephone or in person if you wish to visit us at our offices.

Following the successful completion of the initial enquiry, we may invite you to an information session, we will arrange an initial visit to your home. You may also wish to apply to foster at this stage, and again if we are both in agreement, we will start stage one of the assessment process, which will minimise any delays.



Contact us on

-  020 8489 3754
-  fosteringrecruitment@haringey.gov.uk
-  haringey.gov.uk/fostering

The Assessment Process

At the initial visit, you will have the opportunity to find out more about fostering and the kinds of children who need foster care. We can also advise you on the fostering allowances and discuss with you how you might be able to balance fostering with other commitments you may have, such as children or work.

If the outcome of the initial visit is positive, we will invite you to our next preparation training for prospective foster carers, which is called 'Skills to Foster'. This three-day training is a mandatory part of the assessment, and both you and your partner are required to attend. This training will help you to learn in greater depth about fostering and the role of the foster carer, and also assists us to gain a sense of whether you have the potential to foster.

There are two stages to the assessment process, and sometimes they can run at the same time to make things as seamless as possible. Once you have indicated to us that you wish to apply to become a foster carer, and if your application is in line with our current recruitment criteria, we will start the first stage of the assessment process.

Stage One

At stage one, we take up checks and references about you and your family in order for us to establish:

- The suitability of you and your household to foster
- Whether your home will provide a safe, comfortable environment for a foster child/ren
- Whether you would be able to provide a good standard of care to a foster child/ren
- At any stage of the process you will have an opportunity to meet with an existing foster carer on a one-to-one basis, to find out first-hand about what it is like to be a foster carer for Haringey.

Stage two

During stage two, more detailed information is gathered. You will be allocated an assessing social worker, who will meet with you approximately six to eight times in your home, to carry out an assessment which will be presented in a report to our Fostering Panel after a four to five month period. During the visits, the assessor will get to know you well, and set you some practical tasks as part of the assessment process.

The purpose of the visits is to assess how you would manage fostering and to determine, with your help, what type of fostering would be suited to you and your family. You will have an opportunity to share any concerns you may have, and to consider more closely the impact fostering will have on your family. Once Haringey's Fostering Panel have considered your assessment report, they will make a recommendation and shortly thereafter our Assistant Director, who is Haringey's decision maker, will make a final decision about approving you as a foster carer for Haringey.

Although the fostering process can seem a little daunting, our current foster carers tell us they found it a rewarding experience, which gave them opportunities to reflect and gain a clear sense of the skills they bring to fostering and also, of which skills they will need, with support, to develop further.

We promise to make it as straightforward and simple as possible and to support you every step of the way. The most important thing to remember is to be open, honest and to discuss any concerns you may have early on, so that we can address them. The assessment is a two-way process, so as we learn about you and your capacity to foster children, you are also learning about how the department works and expectations of support available to foster carers.

FAQ

There are some general misconceptions surrounding who can become a foster carer. Almost anyone who has a desire and the capacity to help care for a child can become a foster parent. Here are a few of our frequently asked questions, this may also answer any questions you might have.

Do I have to be married or in a relationship?

You can be married, single, living with someone or part of the LGBTQ+ community. Remember that your partner will also be assessed as to their suitability to foster children.

Does it matter if I rent my house or flat?

You can rent or own your home. What matters is that you have enough room for a child and your housing circumstances are not temporary.

Can I become a foster carer if I have a disability?

Having a disability does not disqualify an individual from fostering a child. It is important, however, foster carers with a disability know how to advocate for themselves and be able to access the resources and information needed to care for a child despite their unique circumstances.

Do I need a spare room?

You will need a spare room that a foster child can have as their own, however if you choose to foster a baby the baby could sleep in a cot in your room.

Can I work?

If you are fostering a child under 12 years old, then you should not be working. However, if your work is based from home this will be considered. If you are caring for an older child and your working arrangements are flexible and not more than 18 hours a week you will be considered. It is important that you are able to balance your work with the needs of the child. If you are working full time you will still be considered if you are interested in offering respite care. This means weekends, during school holidays or for other short periods of time.

Can I take a foster child on holiday?

In theory yes, but it may depend on the child's legal status. You will need to give us advance warning of the dates that you will be away and be sure that the holiday fits in with the child's routine.

What do I tell my own children?

It is important that you tell your own children and other family members and friends about your decision to foster, so that they understand what it means. Your children may have feelings about it that do not come out immediately. You will need to enable them to tell you how they feel. They, too, will be part of your assessment to be a foster carer.

Do I need any special qualities?

You will need sensitivity, patience, commitment and to be able to communicate well with children. You will need to be resilient, so that you can help children through any difficult patches. You need to have some experience or have an understanding of child development and an understanding of how society affects children today.

How many children can I foster at one time?

You can have up to three children depending on the amount of room you have and the energy, skills and experience that you have to give. If brothers and sisters are looking for a foster home, it is usually better for them if they can stay together.

How long will a young person stay in my care??

This varies according to each child's individual circumstances; it could be a day, a month, a year or more. They will generally be with you for a specific reason. They will have a care plan and you will be given tasks to help them achieve their goals. When this is sorted out, they will return home or permanent plans will be made for them.

What will the foster children call me?

It is best if your young person calls you something that they and you feel comfortable with. If there are other adults and/or children in your family, they will need to feel comfortable with it too.

How will they get to school?

You will need to ensure that all children in your care get to school. This is one reason that we prefer our foster carers to live in or near Haringey – children can then stay in the school that they know and it is relatively easy for you to make sure that they are there every day.

What information will I be given about the child?

We think it's important that foster carers know about the child they are looking after. You will be given information about their health and educational needs, their family background, behaviour patterns and any social or cultural needs that they may have.

What age do young people stop being fostered and what happens to them then?

Haringey cares for young people until they reach 18 years old. A service called "Leaving Care" will be involved with each young person between the ages of 16-18 whilst they are in foster care to help them learn to live independently and make plans for adulthood.

How often and where will children have contact with their own parents or family members?

Many of the children have contact with their parent or parents. The regularity of this contact and the venue in which it takes place will vary according to individual circumstances. It is common for contact to take place in the foster carer's home as this is where a child may feel most comfortable and secure. Any arrangements will have been agreed in the child's Care Plan, which is regularly reviewed in case anything needs to change.

Will this affect my benefits?

Neither your allowance nor your reward will affect any benefits, that you might be getting, such as income support, housing benefit or disability allowance. However, you do need to declare that you are a foster carer and in receipt of allowances.

Do I have to have insurance?

We recommend that foster carers take out insurance to cover any accidental damage.



Thank you for taking the time to find out more about fostering with Haringey.

Fostering is undoubtedly a challenging vocation. However, these challenges are heavily outweighed by the opportunity you will have to change the course of a young person's life.

You'll provide love and support to children who often haven't had the chance to experience a vibrant childhood, and in doing so, give them the opportunity to do things that other children take for granted.

We hope you can join us in changing young people's lives. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Contact us on



020 8489 3754



fosteringrecruitment@haringey.gov.uk



haringey.gov.uk/fostering