

WE ARE FOSTERING.



A GUIDE TO FOSTERING

WE ARE NEWHAM.

FOSTERING

Thank you for contacting Newham's Fostering Service. This is your first step on the road to fostering a child. This brochure outlines what is involved in becoming a foster carer. We hope you find it both interesting and informative.

If you have any further questions about becoming a foster carer after reading this brochure, please refer to our contact details on the back cover.

When you foster a child, you look after them in your own home as part of your family. You will be caring for that child on behalf of Newham Council and the child's parents. The child's social worker and sometimes the child's parents are still involved in the decisions about the child.

Fostering is often used to provide temporary care while the child's parents get help sorting out their problems. Children can then return home once the reasons why they came into care have been resolved and we are confident parents are able to look after them safely.

For other children, returning them to live with their birth family may not be an option because we are concerned for the child's safety or wellbeing. For these children, long term fostering, special guardianship or adoption will be considered. The role of a foster carer is so important, not only for the day to day care they provide, but for helping the child feel safe, secure and settled during their time in care. A foster carer can also encourage the child or young person to develop their skills and confidence to rebuild their lives.

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WHY ARE CHILDREN FOSTERED?

Children and young people come into care for a number of reasons. It can be due to a parent's ill health, family problems or because a child has been neglected or abused. Although the circumstances may be different, what will be the same for all children are their feelings of anxiety about being removed from their parents and placed to live with strangers. Some children may act out their anxious feelings in their behaviour, which at times you may find challenging, but you will be supported in your role by your own supervising social worker and the child's social worker if this occurs.

TYPES OF FOSTERING

Short term carers

This is when you look after a child for a short period. This can be for a few weeks, months or a couple of years while the child's future is planned and agreed. We call this task-centred fostering.

Long term carers

This is when you foster a child who cannot return to their own family and adoption may not be the most appropriate care option for them. This might be because the child continues to have regular contact with their relatives. Long term fostering means they will stay with you until they become adults and are ready to live independently.





Family and friends carers

This is when you are related to the child or you are a close family friend and you have been put forward or approached by a social worker to care for a specific child.

Emergency carers

This is when you provide a child somewhere safe to stay overnight or for the weekend. This type of fostering is provided by approved task-centred carers.

Respite carers

This is when you care for a child for a short time, on a planned and regular basis. This allows the child's usual foster carer to have a break themselves. This may be for the occasional weekend or perhaps one week during a child's school holiday period. Again, like emergency foster carers, this type of fostering is provided by approved task-centred carers.

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE FOSTER?

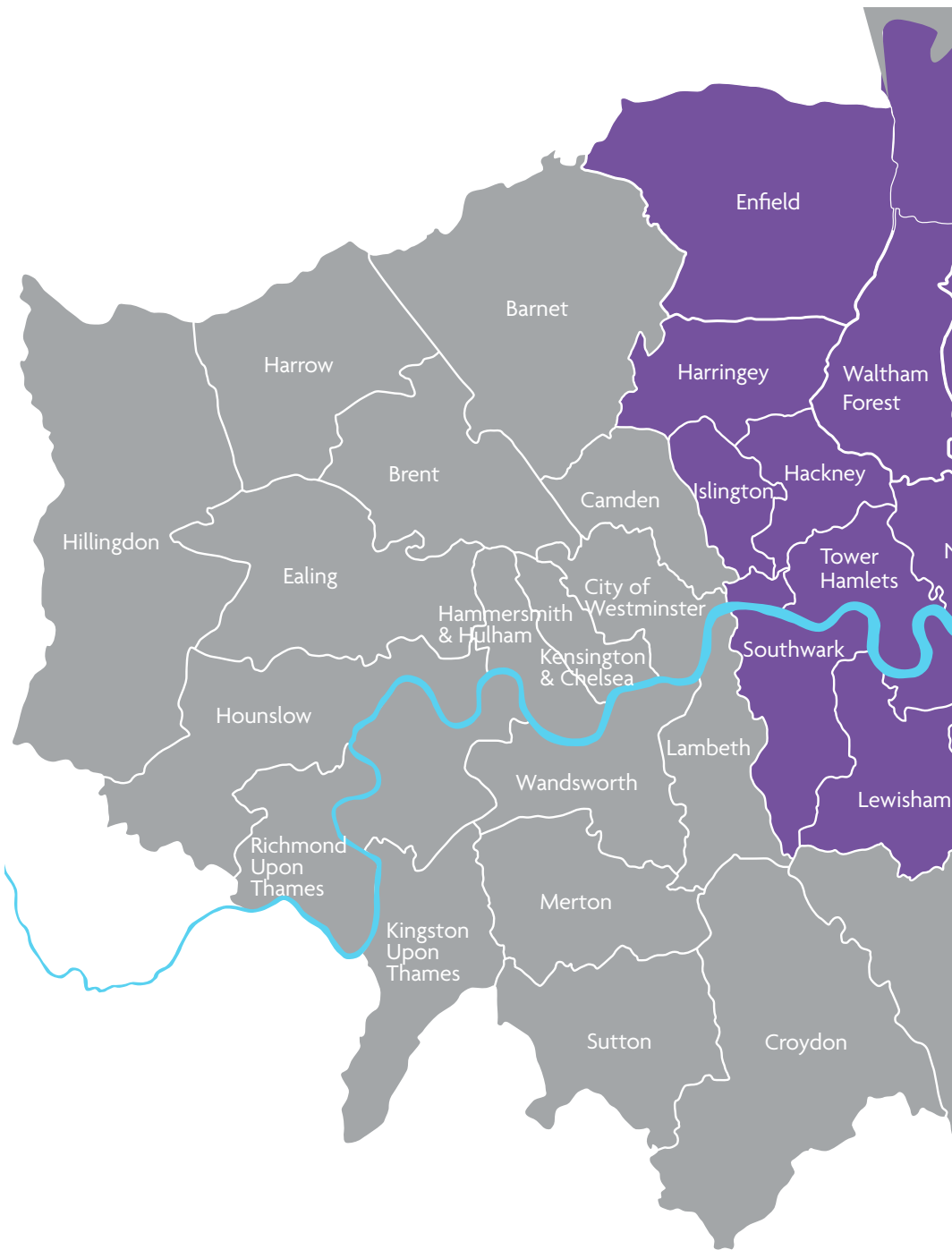
All kinds of people can foster.

We welcome people who are:

- from any cultural, ethnic, religious and social background – we want to reflect the background of the children who need to be in foster care
- almost any age, but we will look at your experience and fitness
- married, civil partnership, single, divorced or living with your partner
- heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender

- in good health
- a parent or not, although it is useful if you have some experience of what it means to care for a child
- renting or a home owner
- living in a property with a spare room, although if you are caring for a child aged 0–3 years, they can share your bedroom
- living anywhere within our catchment area.

Finally, you need to be patient, resilient and understanding, with lots of energy, and to enjoy spending time with and caring for children. It also helps to have a good sense of humour!





We are looking to recruit foster carers from the highlighted area in purple. However, if you are on the border of our catchment area, please feel free to call us for a chat.

A FOSTER CARER'S EXPERIENCE

“The first experience I had of fostering was caring for a newborn baby who had been abandoned. He was only two days old when he came to me and still had his hospital name tag on. I cared for him until he was three years old and placed for adoption. It was hard to let him go, but I knew it was the best decision for him.

My social worker helped me to deal with my feelings of adjusting to him moving on. It was after this experience that I was hooked and I knew I wanted to continue fostering.”

Kaniz started her fostering career with Newham Fostering Service in January 1994. Although she is now married, Kaniz was a single parent when she started fostering, with three boys of her own.

Kaniz said: “For 12 years, I worked in an office for the energy company Powergen, and only left to have my first child. Five years later with three boys of my own, I didn’t want to go back to working in an office. A friend of mine suggested fostering as I loved working with children. I decided to explore it further and contacted Newham Fostering Service.”



“What I enjoy most about fostering is helping to equip the children I am caring for with skills to enable them to become independent and survive in the outside world. The hopes and dreams I have for my own children, I also have for my foster children. It is hard work and challenging, but so worthwhile.”

Twelve years ago, Kaniz studied for and was awarded a Level 3 NVQ in Caring for Children and Young People.



“

“Some of the children I have fostered are now grown up with their own families. Many of them still keep in touch with phone calls and pop in to see me. It amuses me when they visit and I hear them giving advice to both my own and foster children about working hard at school and tidying their rooms. I think to myself, so they did listen to what I was saying after all!”

”

WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We are looking for couples or single people who will care for a child as if they are their own. This means we would expect you to do all the normal tasks involved in caring for a child, such as cooking their favourite food, if they are younger taking the child to school, attending school open evenings, attending medical appointments, buying clothes and school uniforms and making sure they are washed and ironed, and helping them with their homework. But what most children who are fostered need is someone who will listen to them, be consistent with them and help them to feel safe and secure.

We need carers from all racial, religious and cultural backgrounds.

We also need more carers for our teenagers. The teenage years can be difficult with the changes that come with puberty, studying for exams and wanting to fit in with friends. When you add to this the adjustment teenagers in care have to make, often having witnessed or experienced trauma with their birth families, it can sometimes mean their behaviour becomes challenging.

However, our carers who look after teenagers tell us how rewarding and satisfying it is to help a young person overcome their problems and prepare them for adulthood.



Young people now have the option to remain living with their existing foster carers until they are 21. Of course, foster carers will need to be in agreement with this. This is called a 'staying put arrangement.' If you are the main carer looking after a child who is under school age, we would expect you to stay at home to care for them.

You will need to have space for the child you foster and that means a spare bedroom. If you do not have a spare bedroom, you can still foster but only a baby or toddler can share your bedroom until they are three. If you are fostering a sibling group, they can share a bedroom.

If you or a member of your household are a smoker, we would expect you to smoke outside of your home and you will not be able to foster children under the age of five. This is because of the serious health issues that can occur for children from passive smoking.

WHAT SUPPORT WILL I GET?

Once approved, you will be allocated your own supervising social worker who will be there to support you in your fostering role. We also have an emergency duty team on hand to discuss any immediate concerns or worries you may have during evenings, weekends or bank holidays.

Our carers have their own group called Fostering United Newham, which organises a number of events throughout the year to which all foster carers are invited. All new carers will receive membership to Fostering Network, an independent organisation providing high quality support to foster carers throughout the country. When you first become a foster carer, we will give you a setting up grant so you can equip your home ready for when the foster child is placed with you. You will be paid a weekly allowance to cover the costs of caring for the child and you will also receive a weekly fee for yourself.

This fee increases as you develop your knowledge, skills and experience. Additional money is also provided for festivals and the child's birthday to enable you to buy a present for the child.

All carers are required to complete the training, support and development standards within the first year after approval. There is lots of support to help you complete this training and it gives you the chance to meet other new carers. There are also individual training courses held throughout the year, together with ongoing online training.

Carers are also encouraged to attend

1. The Circles of Support Training.

This is a systemic and restorative course with foster carers, supervising social workers and the children's social workers, which aims to bring the different people in the child's system together to think about how they can all work together to improve the care and outcomes for our looked after children.

2. Fostering Changes programme which provides practical advice and training in managing difficult and challenging behaviour.



THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment process takes about four to six months in most cases. This is what the fostering assessment involves:

Stage one

A social worker will arrange to visit you at your home. After the initial visit a social worker will complete a written report. This report will be submitted and approved by the team manager. Following this, we will write to you and let you know whether we are inviting you to the next stage.

The next stage is to attend the Skills to Foster training course. This training runs over three days and will prepare you for your future role as a foster carer. You will also get to meet other prospective foster carers and explore in detail how fostering will fit into your life. At the end of the training, we will ask you to complete a registration of interest form and formally apply to become a foster carer with Newham Council so that you can proceed to stage two, the full assessment.



Stage Two

Stage two begins with taking up checks and references.

These include employment, medical and police checks. Personal references will also be taken with your family and friends on your suitability to foster a child. These checks are a legal requirement for all fostering agencies and are to safeguard children who are being fostered.

The main part of the assessment then begins. You will be allocated your own social worker who will visit you on a number of occasions at home to gather information for the assessment report. This report is called a Form F. They will be interested in your reasons for wanting to foster, what childcare experience you have and how you think fostering will impact on your life.

During the assessment you will be asked lots of personal questions which may, at times, feel intrusive. The aim is to find out about your background and ensure that any child who is placed with you will be safe and well cared for.

All of this information is then put into the Form F report and presented to the fostering panel. You will be able to read the report and make your own comments before it is presented to the panel.

You will then be invited to attend the fostering panel with your assessing social worker. At this stage we are usually confident that the panel will consider our recommendation for you to be approved as a foster carer favourably.

The panel consists of a group of professionals from social work and health care backgrounds and independent people who have experience of fostering or the care system. The panel's role is to consider the report and decide whether to recommend your approval to become a Newham foster carer. Their recommendation is then passed to the agency decision maker, who will make the final decision on behalf of the service.

You are now an approved foster carer – what happens next?

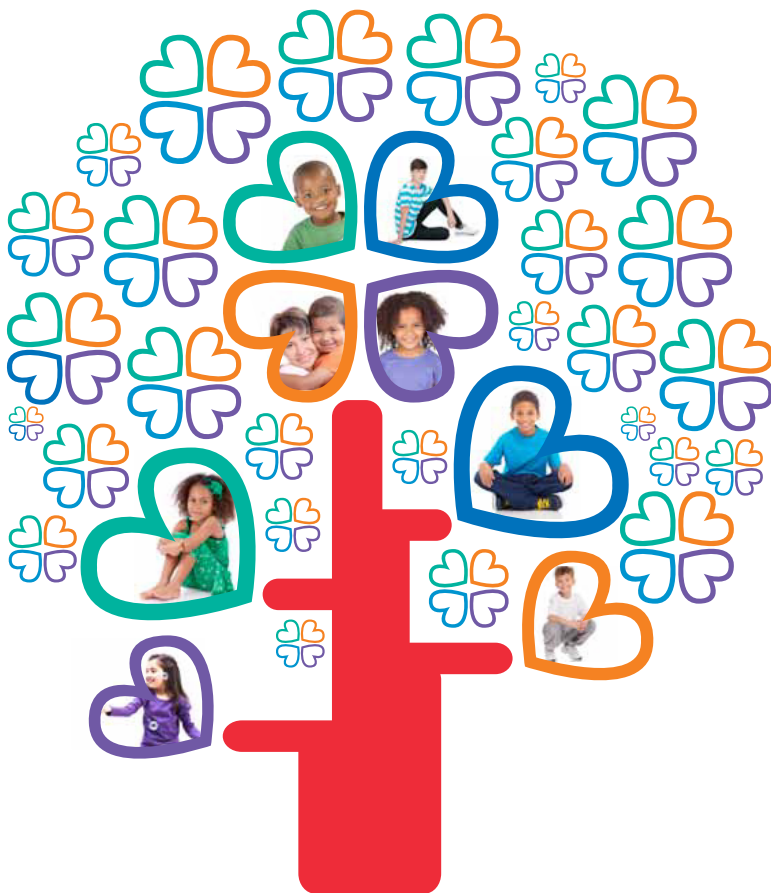
Once you have been approved, you will be allocated your own social worker from the fostering team who will support you throughout your fostering career. The children that you will be caring for will have their own social worker. Your details will also be passed to our placements and monitoring team (often called PAMs). This team will contact you when they are looking to place a child in foster care. Your social worker may also contact you.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARERS

When planning for a child to come into care, we will always explore whether there are any other family members or close friends of the family who are suitable to care for the child.

We call these family and friends carers and they can be:

- grandparents
- adult sisters or brothers
- aunts or uncles
- close family friends who know the child really well.



The assessment process

You will be assessed to become the child's permanent family and friend's foster carer just like any other foster carer. The assessment process takes about 16 weeks in most cases with all relevant information being put into a Form C Report.

You are now an approved family and friends foster carer – what happens next?

Once the fostering panel has approved you to become a family and friends foster carer, you will be sent a formal letter from the agency decision maker. This letter will name the children you are approved to care for. You will then be allocated your own supervising social worker from the fostering team. The child you are caring for will have their own supervising social worker.

All carers are required to complete the training, support and development standards within the first year after approval. There is lots of support to help you to complete this training and it gives you the chance to meet other new carers. There are also individual training courses held throughout the year for you to access together with ongoing online training.

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You will be paid a weekly allowance to cover the costs of caring for the child and you will also receive a weekly fee for yourself. This fee increases as you develop your knowledge, skills and experience. Additional money is also provided for festivals and the child's birthday to enable you to buy a present for the child. We will give you a settling in grant so you can equip your home ready for when the child is placed with you.

We facilitate specialist support groups for family and friends carers. They are also welcome to attend general monthly support groups.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Comments and complaints

If, at any time, you have a comment or concern about your experience of being assessed to become a foster carer, please contact the team manager of the Carer Recruitment Team. They will listen to your comments or concerns and try and resolve any issues that you have with the service or process. If your concerns cannot be resolved, they will refer you to the next appropriate person.

We take complaints very seriously.

If you are unhappy with our service or the way you have been treated please let us know.

Alternatively you can make a complaint by:

Telephone: Complaints & Member Enquiries Team: 0300 121 1231

Post: Complaints & Member Enquiries Team, Newham Council,
3rd Floor East, 1000 Dockside Road,
London E16 2QU

Email:
SSD-customerrelationsteam
@newham.gov.uk

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted inspect our fostering and adoption services.

CONTACTING US

If you want further information on fostering, here are our contact details:

By telephone: 0808 175 3989

By post:
Carer Recruitment Team
2ND Floor, West Wing
Newham Dockside
1000 Dockside Road
London E16 2QU

By email:
fosteringrecruitment@newham.gov.uk

Alternatively, visit our websites at:
www.newham.gov.uk/fostering