

# To Foster is to Care



[haringey.gov.uk/foster](https://haringey.gov.uk/foster)

**Haringey**  
LONDON

## What is fostering?

A foster carer provides a home for children or young people who are unable, for a range of reasons, to live with their own family. Fostering can usually help reduce the pressures on families, allowing time for difficulties to be sorted out so that children can return home. There will be occasions when a child or young person is unable to return to their own family. If this happens, they may be adopted or they may live with long term foster carers.

## What is the difference between fostering and adoption?

Foster carers share responsibility for the children they foster with the parents of those children and with the local authority. In the main, fostered

children will return to their own families after a period of time. There are some foster carers who look after the same child until they are 18 years old. These are called permanent or long-term, foster carers.

When you adopt, parental responsibility for your adopted child becomes yours and yours alone.

You will go through a legal process, at the end of which the Court will grant an order passing parental responsibility for the child on to you. There may or may not be continued direct contact between the child and their birth family, depending upon the decision of the Court.

The procedure for assessing adoptive parents is different to that for foster carers. Full details can be found in our leaflet, Adoption In Haringey or by visiting [www.haringey.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/adoption)



## About Fostering in Haringey

The needs of children and young people in foster homes in Haringey are many and varied. The children are of different ages, from babies to teenagers. They come from many different cultural backgrounds and have many different needs. The older children in particular may well be trying to come to terms with their own identity and will need positive adult role models to guide them.

Foster carers will need particular skills according to the age range of the children they are approved to foster. Haringey's Fostering Service

places great emphasis on skills development and offers specialist support and training to all Haringey foster carers, so that they are able to care for children in ways that best meet their individual needs.

This information guide looks at the kind of questions that people ask when they become interested in fostering. It also explains what happens between the point that you make an initial enquiry and your eventual approval as a foster carer.





## Frequently asked questions about you

### Do I have to be married or in a relationship?

No. You can be married, single or living with someone, lesbian or gay. Remember that your partner will also be assessed as to their suitability to foster children.

### Does it matter how old I am?

Not really. What matters is your health, your energy and your enthusiasm. We also consider your application based on employment and retirement age practices. We are looking for people with all sorts of cultural backgrounds to reflect the various needs of the children needing homes.

### Does it matter if I have a disability?

Not at all, as long as you are physically and emotionally able to look after a child.

### Does it matter if I rent my house or flat?

No. 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.

### Do I need a spare room?

Yes. You will need a spare room that a foster child can have as their own, however if you choose to foster a baby between birth and 14 months 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. An ability to see the funny side of things can come in handy at times.

## Will the children have problems?

All children will be trying to cope with changes in their lives. Some of these changes will have been major, such as bereavement or a form of abuse. Some are likely to have experienced a confusing relationship with a parent, because of illness, or mental health problems, alcohol or drug abuse. Some will be refugees, coming to terms with the traumas experienced in their home country. They will all need security, stability and encouragement.



## Have all the children been abused?

Some children may have experienced various kinds of abuse. This may have been physical, sexual or emotional or a combination of some or all of these. Their reactions to this will be expressed in different ways and foster carers need to be sensitive to their needs so that they can help them to recover. Not all children will come from backgrounds that are as extreme as this, but they are likely to be distressed by having to deal with changing routines in their lives.

## 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 they stay with me?

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's best if they call 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.





## Frequently asked questions about the support we give you

### What do I get paid?

We have a commitment to high standards of practice. In recognition of this and the invaluable work that foster carers do, Haringey's Fostering Service provides a generous fee in addition to a weekly allowance per child in a foster placement. The level of allowance varies slightly according to the age of the child that you foster.

### Will this affect my benefit?

No. 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?

Yes. We recommend that Foster Carers take out insurance to cover any accidental damage.

### What sort of training do I get?

Our carers are required to attend training and take part in learning and development opportunities to enhance their skills. We have a comprehensive annual training programme with courses and workshops covering a wide variety of areas that are crucial to the development of your skills as a foster carer. The programme covers each stage of your development, from induction through to advanced training opportunities that include NVQs. You will also have an individual learning and development plan, which will identify your particular development needs. Courses and learning opportunities are organised at times and in venues that facilitate attendance. In your first year as a foster carer you will be supported to complete your Training Support & Development (TSD) portfolio, required by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC).

## What else do I get to help me?

You will have a supervising social worker, who will be your personal contact for advice, support and supervision. This person is from Haringey's Fostering Service and is always different from the fostered child's social worker. They will visit you every three to six weeks and keep in regular contact. You will also have an Annual Review that is conducted by an independent person. This gives you an opportunity to say how you feel about your work. You will also receive some feedback from your supervising social worker, so you know what areas you need to improve or develop.

Foster carers have access to specialist emergency support outside office hours through the Fostering Service and Council help lines, which between them cover evenings, weekends and Bank Holidays.

The Fostering Service can also provide computers for foster children to use in placement, where appropriate. You will have access to Peer Support from Haringey foster carers through the local foster carers support group and the Haringey Foster Carers Association.

You will also become a member of the main national fostering organisation.

**The Fostering Network**  
[www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net)

## About checks and references

Haringey Fostering Service has a legal responsibility to ensure that children are kept safe. Once you decide that you would like to become a foster carer, you will have to undergo quite a lengthy assessment process. Part of this process involves criminal records checks, medical and local authority checks on you and other members of your household. The reason for this is to check that you are in good health and to establish whether there have ever been criminal convictions for offences of violence or offences against children in order to identify anyone at this stage who may be unsuitable to look after children.

We may also request a criminal records check for some members of your family if they are planning to offer you support in caring for foster children i.e. babysitting.

The criminal records check is only used as part of the fostering assessment and it will not be

disclosed to other departments or to authorities dealing with housing or social security benefits.

We will also need to take up references from the following people:

- Two personal referees who know you well in different aspects of your life
- A member of your extended family
- Your employer
- School or nursery if you have children

## Fostering in Haringey

### About the Assessment Process

We need to be sure that your home environment suits the needs of the children who may be placed with you. It is important that you understand that it will not just be you who is being assessed but also anybody who lives with you. After you attend one of our information sessions and are found suitable to proceed, the process will be as follows:

#### 1. The Initial Visit

The purpose of the initial visit is to see where you live and to find out some more things about you and

your interest in fostering. It is also a good opportunity for you to ask any questions and find out more about what we will be offering you. The social worker who visits you will then write a report and a decision will be made whether or not to go ahead with your application.

#### 2. Preparation Group

You and your partner (if you have one) will be invited to attend our Fostering Preparation Group.

We run these sessions every two months for 3 days. At the end of the course a social worker will help you to complete a form, giving permission for all checks and references to be carried out.

#### 3. The 'Home Study' and Approval

Following the Preparation Group a social worker will be allocated to you to carry out a full assessment, or 'home study'. This generally takes place over three months and involves meeting with you and members of your family and/or support network to help you look more deeply at what fostering will mean. A report is written and discussed with you before being submitted to Haringey's Fostering Panel for approval.

#### 4. The Panel

Fostering Panel is made up of people who are experienced in child care and work related to adoption and foster care. There is also usually an approved foster carer (this will not be a Haringey foster carer) who will consider your application and make a recommendation.

The whole process from beginning to end can take 6 months or more, so you will need to be committed to following it through to the end. You won't be on your own – we will support you every step of the way.

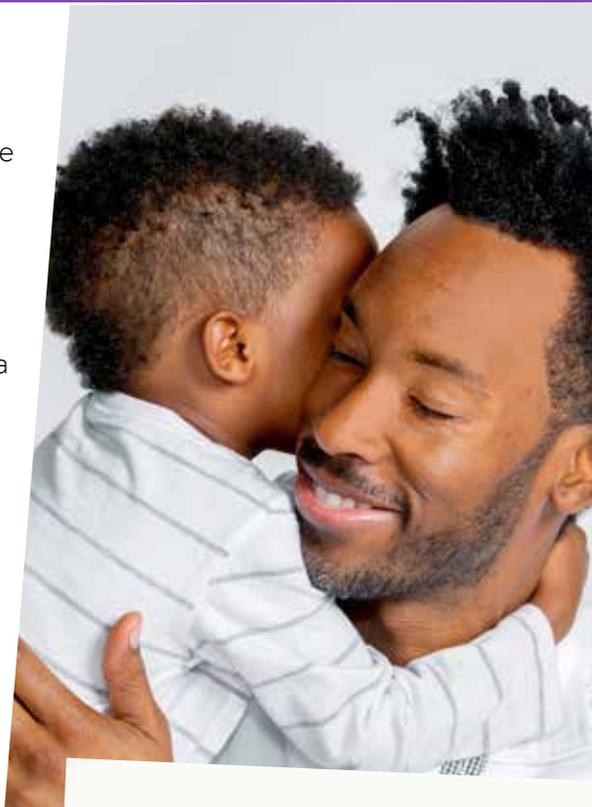
If at any point you would like more information, please contact:

#### **Haringey Fostering Service**

Telephone: 020 8489 3754

Email:  
fosteringrecruitment  
@haringey.gov.uk

We also hold a monthly information session for you to meet a social worker and ask any further questions. Please visit our website for the latest information.



## Complaints

If you are not happy with any aspect of service related to fostering options

firstly, please ring

### **Fostering Recruitment Manager**

020 8489 3754

If you are still unhappy, please write to

**fosteringrecruitment@  
haringey.gov.uk**

### **Children Services Complaints Officer**

Freepost RLZE-ERTJ-CEZJ  
48 Station Road  
London  
N22 7TY

If you are unsatisfied with the response from the above, please contact the

### **Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)**

Contract Manager  
Independent Review  
Mechanism (IRM)  
Unit 4, Pavilion Business Park  
Royds Hall Road  
Wortley  
LEEDS LS12 6AJ

Tel: 0845 450 3956

Fax: 0845 450 3957  
(charged at local rates)

E-mail: [irm@baaf.org.uk](mailto:irm@baaf.org.uk)

[www.independentreview  
mechanism.org.uk](http://www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk)

