

fostering

in Camden



Thank you for your interest in fostering in Camden.

We hope this booklet will answer your first questions about fostering and that you'll want to find out more.

Seeing a child enjoying life and looking forward to the future is one of the greatest rewards of fostering, especially when the child may have experienced neglect or abuse in the past. As a foster carer, you will have to work slowly and patiently with any child placed with you to help them come to terms with their experiences and difficult feelings about separation from their families. We understand the challenges our foster carers face, and we will be with you every step of the way.

0800 028 1436

fostering



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Frequently asked questions about fostering

1. What is fostering?

Fostering is about looking after a child who cannot live with their parents. The child will be living in your home for a period of time that could range from a few days, to several months or, in some cases, several years.

2. Why do some children need to be fostered?

There are many reasons why a child is fostered. There may have been an illness in the family where emergency care was required. The child may have suffered abuse or neglect, or a breakdown in family relations. They may have come here unaccompanied from abroad.

3. What kinds of feelings do children have when they are fostered?

Each child's circumstances are different, but every child will feel anxious about being removed from their parents and taken to live with strangers. This in itself will be a traumatic experience. Often the child will blame themselves for what has happened to them and will feel lonely and isolated. The child may be very withdrawn, finding it hard to make attachments easily. They will need encouragement to help them move on from their difficult experiences, but with patience and understanding from a foster carer, many children can rebuild their lives.

Other children may be angry and confused. They will need resilient foster carers who can look beyond the child's behaviour and try to understand their underlying needs.

4. What sort of backgrounds will fostered children come from and what will they have experienced?

Children needing fostering will have come from very different backgrounds and may have had experiences which had a very negative impact upon them. Some may come from a background where their birth parents have misused substances. In some cases, children will have experienced neglect and they may not have had praise or encouragement. Some will have come to rely on themselves to learn independence and self-care skills, and will not have received guidance and boundaries.

5. What kind of people can foster?

You have to be over 25 years old to foster for Camden, but we welcome applications from all sections of the community, including:

- Childless couples and couples with children.

- Single people with or without children.
- Lesbians and gay men.

Do not rule yourself out, as we look at all applications individually to see what you can offer our children.

6. Do I have to be from a particular racial or religious background?

Children in Camden come from different ethnic and religious groups and some have a mixed heritage. They need to be fostered in a family which closely reflects their birth family. It is important that people from all sections of the community apply to foster children so we can make sure we have foster placements that meet our children's diverse needs.

7. What would stop me from being able to foster?

Few circumstances automatically prevent someone from being able to foster. People who have committed offences against children are the exception to this.



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8. What space do I need at home?

You need to have a spare room for a child to stay in as fostered children and young people cannot share a room. The exception is for babies up to the age of 2, who can share a room with the foster carer.

9. What kind of an allowance will I get?

We pay our foster carers a weekly allowance for each child or young person in placement plus a generous weekly fee for the foster carer. Camden also provides equipment such as beds and cots and any extra items you need to make your house safe and suitable for fostering. Special payments are also made for birthdays, Christmas and family holidays.

10. What training will I receive?

We provide six preparatory training sessions over three days prior to beginning a home assessment. This will give you more information about the skills

you need to foster. We also provide on-going training to meet your individual needs as a foster carer. The on-going training can be basic foster care training to more in-depth therapeutic training. All Camden foster carers are encouraged to undertake NVQ 3 in childcare.

11. What support will I get from Camden?

We pride ourselves on the level of support we offer to our carers.

All foster carers will be allocated a supervising social worker who will visit monthly and when you need support. They are there specifically to support you as a foster carer, as each child will also have their own social worker.

We also have an out-of-hours emergency telephone line so we are just a call away at any time of the day or night.

Camden holds foster carer support groups for friendship and mutual support. The groups also offer informal training. They give us a chance to hear your views so we can positively shape our service to meet the needs of our children and carers.

12. What are my responsibilities as a foster carer?

Foster care is about enabling children who are in public care to have the same opportunities to fulfil their potential as children who live with their parents.

Here are some of your key responsibilities as a foster carer to help children achieve this:

- You should be able to provide a safe, comfortable and friendly home and be committed to caring for children to ensure that they are happy and can fulfil their potential. You may not have to give up working, but you will need to be flexible in order to attend all meetings, appointments, courses and support groups to fully meet the needs of the child.
- You will be expected to support the child's education by attending parents' evenings and other school meetings. You should also ensure that the child attends school regularly and completes homework on time.
- As a foster carer, you will work alongside social workers in arranging contact with birth parents, relatives or friends. If you are looking after an adolescent, you will help them to prepare for leaving care.
- You will be expected to ensure the child remains fit and healthy by registering them with your doctor. You should also make sure that they have regular check-ups and are involved in sports and leisure activities.
- It is essential that you can promote the healthy development of children in your care, as well as give them a positive understanding of their origins, religion and culture. Many children and young people will find it very difficult to adjust to their new home, so it is important that you can work at the child's pace and not have any unrealistic expectations.



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13. Are there different types of fostering?

Short-term fostering

These placements are not always short! Short-term foster carers look after a child for a period of time while arrangements are made for their long-term care. In some cases, the outcome of court proceedings will determine the permanent plan for a child. Some children may return home, while others may move to long-term foster carers. Others become adopted or subject to Special Guardianship (an arrangement similar to adoption).

Long-term fostering

Where it has been decided that a child cannot return home but adoption is not possible, we may choose a long-term foster placement for a child. They will remain there until they are at least 18 years old. This enables children to thrive in a stable home and for foster carers and their families to develop strong, rewarding relationships with children and young people on a more permanent basis.

Specialist foster carers

Some young people present very difficult behaviour and might ordinarily be placed in a residential placement. Many of these young people will have experienced a very traumatic childhood, may have had little routine and are often out of school. We need people with significant experience of working with or caring for young people. You will need patience, understanding, and the ability to care for a young person with complex needs and to bring about positive changes in their life. Carers on this special scheme are paid a significant professional fee in addition to the fostering allowance for each child.

Respite fostering

Respite care is about looking after a child to support a family in crisis or in specific cases to provide support to foster placements. This may be for days or weeks, while support is given to the family or alternative plans are made. If you are only able to offer limited periods of time, this scheme may be for you.

14. Is fostering right for me?

If you can say yes to the following, then you should consider fostering:

- I am able to devote time to supporting and caring for a child.
- I am able to be flexible with my work commitments and lifestyle, and to make adjustments to care for a child.
- I feel I am able to offer high quality care for a child and help them to fit into my family.
- I feel I would be able to cope with a child who may need special support at school or with their behaviour.
- I feel I am able to work cooperatively with the child's parents and with other professionals.



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The fostering process in Camden

Step 1

You contact us

Call us for an informal chat to see if fostering might suit you. We will ask you about your reasons for considering fostering, what support you have, your previous experience and the room you have available in your home. If we are both happy to carry on with your application to foster, we will send you an information pack and an application form. We will invite you to an information session, where you can find out more about fostering. We will also arrange a convenient time for a home visit.

Step 2

Home visit

A social worker from the fostering team will visit your home to decide whether it is suitable for fostering a child and to share information with you about fostering in Camden. They will talk to you about any experiences you have had that may make you a suitable foster carer, and about yourself as a person. You will also be expected to talk about your family and their feelings about fostering. The social worker will write up the discussion and you will both decide whether to move forward to the next stage – the Skills to Foster preparation group.

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Step 3

The Skills to Foster preparation group

This is a compulsory three day course, which is usually run over a 1-2 week period. It will give you an understanding of fostering in Camden and will include why children come into care as well as your role and responsibilities as a foster carer. You will take part in various exercises and group work activities. Following this group, a joint decision will be made by the trainers and you to see if fostering is right for you. If you go ahead, you will move on to the formal assessment process.

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Step 4

The assessment

The formal assessment usually takes up to four months. During this time, you and your partner (if it's a joint application) will talk about your background, your own experiences of education and employment, and your lifestyle. This will include religion, culture and day-to-day living, as well as your skills around caring for children and young people. The discussion will also cover the impact that fostering may have upon you and your family.

As part of the assessment process, we will carry out various checks on you, your partner (if applicable), and any other member of your household who is aged 16 or over. These checks will be made with your local authority, the police, the NSPCC and your doctor and will show whether you are suitable to be a foster carer. We will also ask for references from previous and current employers, as well as personal references from people who know you well and can comment on your ability to care for a foster child.

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Step 5

The fostering panel

You will also be invited to attend the panel. You will have a chance to read your assessment report before it goes to the panel, and will be able to point out anything you may not agree with.

The fostering panel consists of a central list of panel members who have the experience and expertise necessary to effectively discharge the functions of the panel, and who advise the council on the suitability of people who apply to become foster carers. The panel will decide whether or not to recommend to the council your approval as a foster carer but the final decision rests with the Assistant Director of Family Services and Social Work.

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Being a foster carer

Once you have been approved as a foster carer, you will continue to receive support from your allocated supervising social worker who will visit you at home and carry out your annual review. You may also receive mentoring from an experienced foster carer who can support you through your first foster placement, and you will be invited to support groups.

Please call us now for an informal chat on freephone 0800 028 1436 if you feel you can foster a child in Camden. We know that there are many people in and around Camden who would make fantastic foster carers, so just pick up the phone or email us today!



Comments and complaints

At Camden Children, Schools and Families, we want to provide the best possible service. If a foster carer or someone using or planning to use our service is unhappy with any aspect of our service or a decision we make, they can make a complaint.

Most people don't like to complain but sometimes things do go wrong, or you may feel that there is a better way of doing them. If you tell us about it, we can try to put things right.

We have a foster carers' complaints procedure to manage those times when a foster parent is not happy with the service given to them by Camden.

If the complaint relates to services provided to a child or young person then the Children Act complaints procedure must be followed. The child or young person involved in the complaint will then be entitled to an advocate to support and represent them in the process.

You can get advice on making a complaint from the complaints and representations team in the Children, Schools and Families Directorate. You can contact the team on freephone 0800 393 561. Alternatively you can fax 020 7974 1439.

If you prefer, you can write to:
Complaints Unit
FREEPOST RRAR-KKUL-RCEZ
London Borough of Camden
Children, Schools and Families
Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
London NW1 1BD

We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days. You should get a full response within 21 days.

For more details about how to complain, please ask for our complaints and suggestions leaflet by telephoning 020 7974 6673.





If you would like the Fostering in Camden booklet in large print, Braille, on audiotape or in another language, please phone 020 7974 6649.

Camden Fostering Service
London Borough of Camden
Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
London NW1 1BD
Freephone 0800 028 1436
Email fostering@camden.gov.uk
Fax 020 7974 6799
Textphone 020 7974 6866

إذا أردت الحصول على نسخة من كتيب الاعتناء بالأطفال في منطقة كامدن بالطبعة الكبيرة أو على الشريط أو بلغة بريـل أو بلغتك الأم فالرجاء الاتصال مع رقم: 020 7974 6649.

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اگر میخواهید به جزوه سرپرستی کودکان در کمندن به صورت چاپ درشت – چاپ برجسته و یا نوار صوتی و یا اینکه به زبان خودتان دسترسی یابید لطفاً با شماره تلفن 020 7974 6649 تماس حاصل نمایید.

Si vous souhaitez obtenir la brochure « Accueil d'enfants à Camden » en gros caractères, en braille, sur support audio ou dans votre langue, veuillez contacter le 020 7974 6649.

Haddii aad doonaysid buug-yaraha Camden ee Barbaarinta Ilmo aanad Dhalin (Fostering) oo far waaweyn ku daabacan, habka dadka indhaha la' wax loogu qoro (braille), cajalad la dhageysan karo ku duuban (audio tape) ama afkaaga ku qoran fadlan la xidhiidh 020 7974 6649

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