

# BECOMING A Foster Carer

IN BARNET



**BARNET**  
LONDON BOROUGH

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# WELCOME TO Barnet Fostering

Thank you for making an enquiry to Barnet Fostering. We hope this information booklet provides you with the information you need about fostering to make the decisions that are right for you.

Becoming a foster carer is one of the most significant decisions you can make. Foster care can hugely benefit the children and young people you may care for, and it will be very rewarding for you.

We need people like you to care for children and young people until they can safely return to their own families, move onto a permanent family, or live independently.

You can have a significantly positive impact on a child or young person's life by supporting and caring for them in your home, whether it is just for a few days or perhaps for several years.

Barnet Fostering is looking for people who have life experience, patience, empathy and resilience, and with an ability to communicate with children and professionals as we develop the 'team around the child' with you to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children in our care.

# WHY BE A Barnet foster carer?

Some children, despite the best efforts to keep them at home, may need to live elsewhere for a time and you could give a child the opportunity to live in a safe loving home, near to all that is familiar and important to them whilst they adjust to being away from their home.

Being a foster carer in Barnet means that the children you care for can stay in their schools which enables stability, can retain friendships that are very important during this very difficult time and you can benefit from the professional support that is local and more easily accessed.

Barnet Fostering works in partnership with local schools, health, voluntary and council services to ensure we offer the best all round support to our children and their carers.

The children in our care thrive within the stability of a family that can provide them with safe, nurturing and responsible parenting and you could be the one to make that all important difference to the child who needed to be protected from harm.

We offer competitive fees and allowances along with great benefits and rewards, including general and bespoke training and development to help you be the best foster carer possible.

# WHY DO children come into care?

Where possible, we respond to our legal duty to try and keep families together, however, this is sometimes not possible and children need to be cared for away from their families. Fostering is a very important alternative care option for children of all ages.

Children come into our care because of:

- Breakdown in family relationships
- Parental drug or alcohol misuse
- Parental illness or mental ill-health
- Parents without support from family or friends who need help in an emergency
- Parental abuse or neglect
- Children who are vulnerable to exploitation or gang involvement
- Parents of children with disabilities or special needs, needing a planned break from their caring responsibilities



# WHAT IS A foster carer?

A foster carer is the person that opens their home and their heart to children aged 0-18, who are not able to live at home.

Our foster carers provide safe and caring homes and ensure that children are well supported through what are often difficult times. Like any child, a fostered child needs love, security and a warm stable environment so that they can thrive.

As a foster carer manages the day to day care and parenting of the child or young person. Fostering a child is about caring for that child as if they are your own as this is the essence of Barnet's Corporate Parenting principle and pledge to each child.

As a foster carer you will form professional relationships with social workers, health professionals, teachers, and the child's parents and family members. This ensures that you have a support network that enables you to do a rewarding but complicated task.

As the foster carer you will be part of the future planning for our child and to support the professional network you will keep daily logs (a daily record of the events in the life of the child) that provides clear information on what care and support the child or young person needs.

Despite the reason for the child coming into our care, they will need to retain relationships with their family and it is important that you as the foster carer support the children to have contact sessions with their birth family.

# WHO CAN BECOME A *foster carer?*

We are looking for everyday people with life experiences, who have a good understanding of what effective parenting of children looks like and what their needs are as they develop, and who have a desire to work with and care for children.

You should enjoy spending time with children and have flexibility and adaptability to allow fostering to become part of your regular everyday life.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS...

## *Do I need a spare room?*

Yes, to become a foster carer with Barnet you will need to have a spare room.

## *Can I work and foster?*

Yes, you can work however you will need to have the flexibility and availability to effectively meet the needs of the child. This may mean being available at short notice to deal with any emergencies that may arise.

## *How will fostering affect my own children?*

Being a child within a fostering family can be quite tough but it can also have many rewards. Some may find it difficult sharing their parents and belongings and some can find it difficult to say goodbye when the child moves away.

## *I am not originally from the UK; can I still foster?*

Yes, you can still become a foster carer providing you have indefinite leave to remain ('permanent residency') in the UK.

## *Can I foster if I have a criminal conviction?*

It depends on the conviction. All applicants will undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service ('DBS') check as part of the application process.

## *Can I foster if I have had previous involvement with social services?*

This is something that can be discussed with our fostering recruitment team as it depends on the involvement.





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS...

## *Can I foster if I live in rented or council accommodation?*

Yes a foster carer can rent privately or reside in a Council or housing association residence or own their own home.

## *Can I foster if I have no childcare experience?*

It is better if you have some experience working or caring for children however Barnet Fostering offers an extensive training program to support all our foster carers.

## *I am LGBTQIA, can I foster?*

Yes, we welcome LGBTQIA foster carers, and your sexuality or gender identity is not a barrier to being able to foster with us.

## *I am single, can I foster?*

You can become a foster carer whether you are single, married, divorced or cohabiting. We are interested in the care and support you can provide the children that will be placed in your care.

## *I have some health needs of my own, can I foster?*

This will depend on your health needs. We ask that you can safely care for the children in your care whilst still meeting your own health needs. All applicants will undergo a medical check as part of the application process.

## *My religion is important to me, can I still foster?*

Yes, however we would ask you to keep an open mind and be respectful of other religions as the religious beliefs of children and young people in your care may at times be different to your own.



# TYPES OF foster care:

**BARNET FOSTERING NEED FOSTER CARERS WHO CAN LOOK AFTER ALL CHILDREN, INCLUDING TEENAGERS, SIBLING GROUPS AND CHILDREN WITH COMPLEX NEEDS.**

## **EMERGENCY**

Sometimes a child comes into care at short notice due to unforeseen circumstances. Emergency foster care provides somewhere safe for them to stay for a few nights.

## **SHORT TERM**

A short term carer provides care for a child during the time it takes to determine the long term permanent plan for the child. We may be working with the child's family to try and support them to return to live with their family, or if this is not possible to prepare them and support them to move to their new permanent home.

## **LONG TERM**

Long term foster care is a permanency option to be considered for a child who cannot return to their family. A permanent alternative family will allow a child to grow up in a safe and supported environment where they feel they belong, whilst retaining the connection with their birth family.

## **PARENT AND CHILD**

This is a specialist type of fostering where a baby or very young child and their parent comes to stay with you for around 12-weeks at a time when they need extra support. You will support and help assess vulnerable parents and encourage them in learning how to care for their child safely. This can include mothers and fathers, or sometimes, both.





# TYPES OF foster care:

CONTINUED...

## CARING FOR A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

You will be offering parents the opportunity for a break, to give a child, who may have learning disabilities, physical disabilities or medical conditions, a short period of respite. This would usually take place over weekends or during school holidays.

## TEENAGERS

A significant number of children in our care are aged of 13-18 years old. There is a misconception that teenagers are more difficult to look after, however with the right support and training, many of our foster carers provide excellent care to our cohort of adolescents.

## SUPPORTED LODGINGS

Supported lodgings is the chance to offer young people aged 16 to 21 the opportunity to prepare for their living in their own accommodation. You would be acting as a supportive host for these young people in your home. It is a stepping stone to independent living. You would offer emotional support and the chance for young people to learn life skills in a safe place.

## SIBLING GROUPS

Wherever we can, we try to keep siblings together to ensure that siblings do not face the distressing situation of losing the companionship of their brothers and sisters as this relationship is often the most significant and the only positive relationship they have around them.









# WHAT IS IT LIKE TO foster?

**BACKGROUND: JANE AND HER HUSBAND MARK APPLIED TO FOSTER FOR BARNET IN 2007 AND HAVE BEEN FOSTERING SINCE. THEY HAVE CARED FOR IN EXCESS OF 16 CHILDREN, BETWEEN THE AGES OF 0-18.**

## 1 How did you first become a foster carer?

Growing up, my parents fostered and living in a fostering household made it something that I always wanted to do. The timing felt right for me when the company I was working for were offering voluntary redundancy, so I took it and used the opportunity to pursue fostering.

## 2. What made you choose Barnet Fostering?

We decided to apply to Barnet as we lived in the borough and had proactive positive interactions and experience working with their recruitment team from day 1. It is also great as we are local to the schools, training and contact centres.

## 3 What was the assessment process like for you?

The assessment process was 10 months start to finish, we had a nice assessing social worker who got to know us very well during what was a thorough, in depth and at times quite an intrusive assessment process. I understood why it had to be this way but it was difficult at times, as we spoke a lot about everything, things you wouldn't usually talk about with people but we saw it through and have since enjoyed 12 years of fostering amazing children.

#### 4 Once a child was identified what was this process like for you and how did you prepare for the child coming home?

Receiving the news that a child had been identified for us for the first time was very exciting (and is to this day), but also had mixed feelings of sadness knowing a child has been separated from their family. We like to prepare the bedroom in advance where possible for the age/gender of the child changing posters and bedding making it as welcoming as possible and get in any treats we think they might like.

#### 5 What were the challenges of the child/ren settling in and how did you overcome these?

We had a sibling group, aged 1 and 3 for our first placement who when my husband came into the room used to run and hide under the bed. So we had to be very patient and make them feel as comfortable as possible, until they felt safe. We also had to consider our birth children's feelings to ensure they were supported and comfortable with fostering and sharing their parents.

#### 6 What post support have you received

The training has been brilliant, BAFCFA and Support groups have been good too. We have a good relationship with our supervising social worker. Any time we have had an issue we have been able to ring up Barnet and this has been resolved.



## 7 What have you enjoyed the most about fostering?

The best thing about fostering is knowing that you have made a difference. It is about being a stop gap between things not going very well and helping them move towards something better. It has been lovely seeing children go home or on to be adopted and with our current foster child watching him grow up knowing that we are guiding him the best we can. Our birth children have benefitted too, what they have shared they have also very much gained. They are a lot more appreciative of what they have had growing up, having worked in an office job for 18 years I feel much more fulfilled.



# SUPPORT AND REWARDS

Barnet Fostering offer excellent support packages as we want you and your family to feel fully supported. This will include:

## **SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKER:**

You will be allocated a dedicated social worker who will meet with you regularly to provide you with support and supervision. There is also a 'out of hours' 24-hour support line where you can speak with a duty social worker who can support you with any immediate concerns.

## **BUDDY FOSTER CARER:**

We will buddy you with an experienced Barnet foster carer who will support you with your fostering journey.

## **TRAINING**

We offer a comprehensive and on-going training and development programme to support you continuing to develop your skills as a foster carer.

## **PAYMENT AND MAINTENANCE FEE**

We will pay you a skills-based fee and a maintenance allowance for each child you look after, with fee levels that reflect the experience and training you have developed as a foster carer. You will also be given additional birthday and holiday allowances for each child you look after and a planned break each year.

## **REGULAR LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS**

These regular support groups provide foster carers a much-needed opportunity to talk about fostering matters with staff, and with other carers who have a wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise.



## **BARNET FOSTER CARERS ASSOCIATION (BAFCA)**

Barnet Foster Carers Association run monthly support groups (peer to peer) and offer advice and ways forward in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere amongst friends and colleagues.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE FOSTERING NETWORK**

We will provide you with membership in the Fostering Network, an independent national charity which offers free support, discounts, training and events. Visit: [www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk](http://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk) to find out more

## **VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

Barnet's Virtual School provide direct and online educational support to children in our care ensuring that they achieve the best possible educational outcomes.



# THE fostering **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**



## INITIAL SCREENING/VISIT

At this point a member of our team visits you and your family at home to discuss the potential of you becoming a foster carer.



## SKILLS TO FOSTER

You complete the Fostering Application form.

You or you and your partner will be invited to attend our local 3 day Skills to Foster training course. The course is run by members of our team.

You will also meet an experienced foster carer and young people who have experienced foster care.



## FORM F

This is your fostering assessment. You will meet with your assessing social worker over a period of about four months where they will get to know you and your family. We will support you throughout this process and you will be partnered with one of our experienced foster carers to learn more about fostering.



## PANEL

Once you have completed your assessment you and your social worker will write a report that goes to our fostering panel.

You will attend the fostering panel, where a recommendation will be made regarding your approval as a Barnet Foster carer.

The final approval decision is made by the Agency Decision Maker, who is a chief officer within Children Social Care

The timing of this can vary dependent on you and your family's needs,

Transferring: If you are transferring from an independent Fostering Agency (IFA) or have previous experience of being a registered foster carer you may be fast-tracked.

# **BECOMING A** *Foster Carer* **IN BARNET**

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Thank you for taking the time out to learn out more about Barnet Fostering.  
Please contact us using the details below should you need more information.

**EMAIL: [FOSTERING@BARNET.GOV.UK](mailto:FOSTERING@BARNET.GOV.UK)**

**CALL: 020 8359 6274**

**[BARNET.GOV.UK/FOSTERING](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/fostering)**