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Fostering in Hackney

Become a foster carer and help a child to thrive



What is fostering?

Fostering is caring for children in your own home whilst their own parent/s are unable to. Being a foster carer can mean looking after children for as little as a day, to a week, a month, a year or several years. Helping children to thrive in a caring and safe environment.

How long does fostering last for?

A child may only stay with you for a few days or a week. Sometimes a child may only stay for one night. Sometimes though children can stay for longer. It may be that the help families need can take some time to provide. It might also be that there are concerns about the care children have received at home. These concerns may take longer to resolve. Occasionally we may decide that the children cannot return home. If they are young enough we will search for an adoptive family for them to give them long term security. If the children are older, such as teenagers, then we may search for a family who will provide foster care until they are ready to live independently.

What kind of children need foster carers?

Children living in Hackney come from a wide range of backgrounds. It is a borough rich in cultural and ethnic diversity and the children and families needing support reflect this diversity. The children requiring a supportive home can be any age from a day old to 16 years old. When you become a foster carer you can discuss the age of the children that you feel will best fit into your family and what type of fostering would best suit you. It may be one child or a family of five and we will always try to keep as many of the children together as possible.

Types of fostering

Short-term

Foster carers look after children for a few weeks or months, while plans are made for the child's future.

Long term fostering

Long Term Fostering means having the commitment to care for a particular child normally over the age of ten years, assisting them in the transition to adulthood, where adoption has not been possible.



Specialist fostering - Hackney Local Intensive Fostering programme (LIFe scheme)

The Hackney LIFe scheme looks for foster carers for young people between the ages of 10 to 16 years who have shown complex and challenging behaviours. Each foster placement is for 6 months, after which the young person moves on to a permanent placement or returns to their birth or adoptive family.

This programme combines specialist foster care with support services, both practical and emotional, which wrap around the young person and provide a total integrated service. Fostering such a young person will mean developing a strong relationship, helping them through their crisis and hopefully being part of the solution. You will need skills in managing teenagers, determination and a sense of humour to help with some of their difficulties. It will mean working closely with their families and professionals such as Youth Justice. If you have a genuine interest in helping young people overcome their difficulties, and are able to give them hope and empowerment to carry them through into their adult lives, this very rewarding salaried scheme may be for you.

Mother and baby fostering

Foster carers will look after young mothers and their babies and help in developing their parenting skills. You will need a spare room, understanding and knowledge of child development. An ability to allow young mothers space to bond with their child and record their progress. A placement may last for 6 to 12 months. You do not need to be, or have been a parent or be in a partnership – we look at all applications to see what you can offer.

Family and friends (Kinship) fostering

When a child has to come into Care, a social worker checks whether there is anyone in the child's family or friends who could look after the child. If the child stays for more than six weeks that person/s needs to be assessed for approval as foster carers for that child.

Disabilities

Caring for children with disabilities can be a positive and rewarding experience. Carers will be expected to demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the needs of children with disabilities together with the willingness to develop their skills. The Authority will provide specialist training, support and a generous allowance.

How fostering might affect a child

Simply separating a child from their parents is traumatic in itself. Many children have also suffered some harm before they join a foster carer, and it may be this harm that is the reason why they are being looked after. This means that the children joining foster carers often require extra care and consideration. They may need extra help with their development or recovery from the harm that they have suffered, which will require patience and understanding.

Foster carers are part of a team

Foster carers work as part of a large team of people trying to help the family. They work with parents and relatives, social workers, teachers, health professionals, counselling and therapeutic services, and many others.

What do foster carers do?

Foster carers provide children with day to day nurturing and stability – this involves working in partnership with social workers, parents and other people involved in a child's life – including their educational and health needs. A large part of a carer's job is helping a child maintain contact with their parent/s, wider family and friends. Moving to a foster home is usually an unsettling experience. Foster carers need to help children settle in by listening and talking with them. Children need stimulation, understanding and a secure environment to help them understand why they are living away from home. Foster carers may also help to support plans for the child and their family to live together again in the future. This may include family visits to provide parents with information about their child.

What else may foster carers do?

- Help a child develop self-esteem
- Make time available when a child wants to talk
- Help a child move on
- Help a teenager prepare to live independently
- Attend training workshops
- Arrange appointments with a doctor or the hospital
- Care for a child affected by HIV
- Help a young person keep court appearances
- Care for children who have been sexually abused
- Help with homework and build relationships with teachers

To achieve these tasks you will need

- Enthusiasm
- Resilience

- Warmth
- A sense of humour!
- A commitment to help the children/young people resolve their difficulties
- A spare bedroom

Who helps the foster carer?

Each foster carer is allocated a supervising social worker from the fostering team to provide the advice, support and supervision needed. There is a strong commitment to giving carers the training that they require to help them provide the care that children need. Preparation training is given to all applicants before they care for children, followed by core training modules throughout the year, once they have been approved as foster carers. All foster carers go on to take an NVQ qualification in child care.

Core training available to foster carers:

- Exploring identity
- Managing Behaviour
- Contact with birth families
- Child Health and development
- Life skills – direct work with children
- Dealing with loss and separation
- Sexuality and sex education
- Drug solvent and alcohol abuse
- Disability awareness
- Child abuse and neglect

The rewards of fostering

- A generous financial allowance
- The satisfaction of being part of a team supporting children/young people during troubled times in their lives.
- The joy of an ongoing relationship with some of the young people when they have left the care system and knowing that you have played a significant role in their lives.
- On going training and opportunity to study for an NVQ
- On going support, including an out of hours support telephone line
- An active independent Foster Carers Support Group for mutual support, friendship and skill sharing.

Fostering Approval Process



1. Telephone Contact: **08000 730 418**

2. Information sent out about adoption

2a. You do not proceed

3. Return the form confirming your interest

4. Initial Interview

5. Discussion takes place with Team Manager

6. Decision that we can proceed with your enquiry

6a. Decision that we cannot proceed

7. You will be sent an application form to complete, giving us permission to start your checks, ie police checks, references, medical etc. Hackney will take up personal references and if applicable employer references.

8. You are invited to attend preparation-training sessions, where you can learn about what is involved in fostering. It is a chance to meet other people who are going through the process and to talk to experienced foster carers. Before, during, or after these sessions you will meet the social worker who will be carrying out your personal assessment.

9. Your allocated social worker will arrange weekly or fortnightly appointments to meet with you. During these sessions, a range of different topics relating to the needs of children who require fostering are covered. You discuss with the social worker, the number and ages of children you could foster. The assessment on average takes between 6-8 visits.

10. Home study - All the information provided is collated into a report, which outlines your skills, your future training needs etc. You see the social worker's report or Form 'F'. If you disagree with it, you can make your comments in writing.

11. Your social worker presents the report to the Fostering Panel.

12. The Panel makes a decision to approve you as a foster carer. If you are not approved you can make representations to the service.

13. If approved, you will be allocated a supervising social worker, who will support and monitor your progress as a carer.

14. You will be offered ongoing training & opportunities to meet other foster carers.

15. Your approval is reviewed annually or when there is a significant change around your circumstances.

Hackney Fostering Teams aim to work in partnership and provide a high quality service.