Fostering

Come and join our outstanding fostering team!
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- Outstanding services for children and families - a four star local authority (Ofsted, December 2008).
- Outstanding Fostering Service (Ofsted inspection, September 2007).
- Excellent support services for looked after children, including:  
  - educational support, specialist teachers and a virtual school.
  - specialist nurse for looked after children
  - young peoples’ activities co-ordinator
  - advocacy and participation officer for young people
  - specialist clinical psychologists.
- Your own supervising social worker to guide and support you, recognise your skills and help you to develop further.
- Specialist training both before and after you are approved as a foster carer.
- Support groups for foster carers close to where you live.
- A buddy scheme and peer mentoring.
- Awards from the borough to recognise the achievements of foster carers and young people.
- Membership to the Fostering Network and the newly formed Local Foster Care Association.
What does fostering mean?

Fostering means caring for a child or children who are not your own. It is a service which offers hope and support to many families, some in crisis.

It is not always easy. It can be demanding, stressful and a lot of work, but it can also be enormously rewarding and a lot of fun.

It can be for short periods (a matter of days or weeks), for longer periods of months or years, or sometimes permanently.

Focusing on the needs of the child is the overriding priority. The partnership between parents, carers and social workers is also vital.

Foster carers touch the lives of every child they welcome into their home by providing security and stability, and allowing them to thrive and develop.
“Whoever you foster, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea will work with you to give you all the necessary support and guidance you need.”
Who needs fostering?

Homes for children of all ages and backgrounds are required. There are also children with special needs, sibling groups, teenagers and young mothers with children. We will reach an agreement with you as to what age range would best suit your family.

All these children need homes for different reasons, although it is often because of:

- a crisis in their family
- illness
- parents not being able to cope
- physical or sexual abuse
- violence
- drink or drug addiction
- neglect.
Who can apply to foster?

There is no typical foster carer and we welcome applications from all kinds of people. We need carers from all walks of life and from all the ethnic groups represented in our borough. We always try to match the child with a foster family who shares their ethnicity, language and culture.

You can foster whether:

- you rent or own your home
- you live in or outside the borough - although we do ask that you live near enough to take the children to their current school, and to see their family and friends, here in Kensington and Chelsea
- you are in receipt of benefits, employed or unemployed
- you are single, married, living with a partner, same sex or heterosexual relationship
- you have children or not
- you practice a religion or not.

Most of all, foster carers should have an understanding of children and their needs, and have experience of caring for their own or other people’s children. You also need to have space in your home for a child, with a spare bedroom for the foster child.

“Don’t rule yourself out! We will look at all applications on an individual basis.”
What support will I get?

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea offers a comprehensive package of training and support for its carers.

- Each foster carer has their own supervising social worker to guide, support and supervise their work.
- There is a very comprehensive training programme. All carers also have the opportunity to undertake the NVQ in caring for children and young people.
- There is a wide range of professional support from healthcare, education, psychological and other disciplines.
- Foster carers will have access to a range of support groups for foster carers in many areas of London. They will also receive membership to the Fostering Network.
- There is support offered for sons and daughters of foster carers.
- The Royal Borough offer free swimming and other great concessions for foster carers at borough leisure centres.
- Social events for foster carers and their children are also held over the course of the year.
- Foster carers may also receive an award from the Mayor at an annual award ceremony, along with bonus payments in recognition of long service.
- Fees and allowances for fostering in the Royal Borough are also above the nationally recommended rates (details in separate sheet).
How do I become a foster carer?

You contact us

You can call us to ask for a fostering information pack, or speak with a member of the team to discuss whether fostering might suit you. We will ask you about your reasons for considering fostering, your previous experience and the room you have available in your home. Then, if we are both happy to carry on with your application to foster, we will arrange to visit you in your home.

Home visit

A social worker from the Fostering team will visit your home to decide whether it is suitable for fostering a child. The visit will also give you the chance to show the social worker what you are like as a person and highlight any experiences you have had that may make you a suitable foster carer. We will also ask about your family and their feelings about fostering.

The social worker will discuss your application with other members of the Fostering team and then decide with you whether it would be right for you (with your partner, if applicable) to be formally assessed as a foster carer.

The assessment

The formal assessment can take up to five or six months and a social worker will visit your home many times. You 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.

We will carry out various checks on you, your partner (if applicable), and any other member of your household who is aged 18 or over. These
checks will be made with your local authority, the Criminal Records Bureau, 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.

**The Skills to Foster preparation group**

This compulsory four-day course will give you an understanding of fostering in Kensington and Chelsea. With the help of group activities, the Skills to Foster preparation group will help you to understand why children come into care, as well as your role and responsibilities as a foster carer. This is an integral part of your fostering assessment.

The course may take place before the formal assessment visits to your home, or after the assessment has begun. Following the course, a joint decision will be made by the trainers and you as to whether fostering is right for you. Information about your contribution to the course will form part of the final report.

**The fostering panel**

Once the assessment is finished, the social worker will write an assessment report which they will present to the fostering 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. You will also be invited to attend the panel.

The fostering panel is a group of professionals drawn together from a variety of backgrounds to advise the Council on the suitability of people who apply to become foster carers. They will decide whether or not to recommend that the Council approve you as a foster carer, although the final decision rests with the Agency Decision Maker (the Head of Family and Children’s Services).
What do our foster carers have to say?

Tereza Glai and her husband Habtai have been foster carers for 15 years. In this time they have fostered more than 20 children of all ages, from birth to 19 years old. She says:

“I came to fostering because of my personal experience when I left my own country as a child. People cared and shared and gave me hope, and I wanted to give some of that to children who needed it.

“I would really recommend other people to apply to be foster carers, I always do. It gives you satisfaction when you help others. I love what the young people bring to my life - the company, the fashion and the music they play in my home.

“When you are a foster carer it prepares you to be a good enough parent to your own children as well. It also makes you more accepting and respectful about what families mean to different people. My concept of family life has been broadened.”

Dianne Hardy has fostered 12 babies and toddlers, and one very short-term placement for a teenager, during her ten years of fostering. She says:

“After my daughter was born I applied to foster, as I wanted to carry on working with children but from home. I had been working in a nursery before that and knew it was something I was good at.

“I have cared for 12 children and love the diversity of it. I am always learning from the different people I meet and the whole new set of experiences. I find it enriching and challenging and would definitely recommend others to apply.”
Do contact us!

If you would like to know more about fostering, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us on 0800 183 2400.

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
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