

Foster with Barking and Dagenham Council



Thank you for enquiring about Fostering with Barking and Dagenham Council.

We are proud of our foster carers, and equally proud of the support and training that we offer them. At Barking and Dagenham, we have high standards and expect much of our professional foster carers. This is because our children deserve the best – to be loved and well cared for.



There are many children and young people in Barking and Dagenham that need your help. For a variety of reasons, these children and young people can't live with their own families and need a supportive foster family to look after them until they can return home, the court outcome is complete, or until they reach adulthood.

We aim for all children to be safe, stay healthy, enjoy life, and achieve in their education. We want them to enjoy fun and happy childhoods. We want them to be able to make a positive contribution to the community, achieve good employment and become the independent, capable adults of the future.

But we need your help.

Our Fostering Team is seeking applicants from all backgrounds and walks of life, who can provide a caring, calm and welcoming home for local children in need. To become a foster carer with us you will need:

Either room in your bedroom for a child aged 0-2, or

A spare room for children aged three and over. A space for the young person to call their own.

Time – to take the young person to appointments, family visits, school and other places essential to their development, as well as time to explore leisure activities, ensuring they get to have the learning and fun that all children deserve to experience.

Patience – no young person is the same, and they've all had differing life experiences, and it can take time for them to settle into a new home. Your role in helping them is to give them the time to adapt, and the space for them to settle while making them feel wanted and welcome.

Love – our children need compassion, kindness, understanding and love. They need stable adults in their lives who can be there for them, at all times, no matter how they are feeling or what they are facing in life. Our children will often have experienced adversity and will have learnt different coping strategies. They need to be given time and patience so they may learn how to settle and feel accepted in a new family environment.

Have you thought about fostering?

Why not give us a call at Barking and Dagenham, and we can try to answer all of your questions.

To find out more, please call:
020 8227 5988
Or visit:
fostering.lbbd.gov.uk
and we will support your application every step of the way.

Fostering is a rewarding yet challenging role.

That's why we provide dedicated, comprehensive support to our foster carers throughout their journey, both through assessment and once approved.



Here's how we ensure you have the tools and assistance you need:

How it starts – firstly we will have a chat with you on the phone, and answer as many questions as you have, and we might also ask you a few of our own. From here we will advise you if we can take your application forward. If we can, then we will visit you and the family in your home, at a time and date that suits you, carrying out an Initial Visit. And if this goes well then, we will invite you to our three-day preparatory training called The Skills to Foster. Here you will meet other applicants and some of our staff too, whilst learning about what Fostering is like with Barking & Dagenham.

Making sure you're foster ready – From the start of your approval and throughout your fostering journey, we will provide regular training courses to ensure you're able to provide the right support that our young people need.

Carer support groups – From day one you will join our regular support groups and connect with other foster carers. You can share your experiences or come and listen to others, to increase your knowledge, get fresh ideas and grow your support network. Our support groups are welcoming and full of others who have walked the same path that you are starting out on. We can also link you with an experienced local carer who will become your fostering buddy for the first year of your approval.

Financial support – We offer a very competitive weekly payment to help you cover the cost of looking after our children. We also offer guidance to ensure you receive everything you are entitled to. Additionally, every year, we'll pay for you to join either The Fostering Network or Fostering Talk. These are national organisations who will provide you with independent advice and support if you need it. We will also provide you with support to help navigate becoming self-employed (all foster carers are) and support you in ascertaining whether you may be entitled to additional financial support once you become approved.

Respite – Fostering is a full-time role and within our Mockingbird Hubs we ensure foster carers receive breaks and support. At times of family need we

also strive to support our carers when we can, and this will be reliant on each individual circumstance.

Expert help – Fostering is what we do, and we will support you every step of the way throughout your fostering career. Our award-winning team of dedicated Fostering Social Workers will be there to connect you with children's social workers, teachers, therapists and other professionals, making your life easier. We will also offer you professional supervision and high levels of advice and support, as well as locally sourced expert training. For you to support our children well, we in turn will offer you the same. We take pride in the support we offer our foster carers.

Here are some frequently asked questions, that may help you to decide that Fostering is right for you:

What skills do I need?

Anyone who is interested in becoming a foster carer already has the key skill needed – a genuine desire to support young people.

If you have the space, time and patience to help a young person then we can give you all the training and support you need to foster.

Your faith, ethnicity or culture, your sexuality, your age, or whether you already have children will not be a barrier to you applying – if you would like to help children in need then we would like to hear from you, no matter your personal circumstance. All applications are welcomed.

What does foster care look like day-to-day?

Apart from meeting the child's basic needs, like getting the child to and from school, clothing and feeding them, and providing a secure home life with warmth, kindness and love, Foster Carers can expect to work with other people who play key parts in our child's life.

Most important among these are the child's family – you will have a vital role to play in ensuring children and their families stay in contact. Other people you might see regularly will include social workers, teachers, therapists and health professionals too, although this list is not exhaustive.

Don't be worried though, working with others as part of a team is a key part of the role. You will be the lynchpin,



ensuring everyone knows what is going on with the children you are caring for, and your role will be vital, and well respected.

Can I foster and still work?

For most types of foster care, we require at least one carer per household to be available at all times, and if this person is not currently working then this is preferable. However, we can discuss your personal circumstances and let you know if we can progress with your application, so please don't be afraid to apply.

This rule does not apply to short break foster carers, who will often offer care for our children at weekends. Why not give us a call and we can discuss your individual circumstances.

Do I need to be married?

You do not need to be married or live with someone to become a foster carer. However, you will need to consider your support network. Who can you rely on for practical assistance? Many of our foster carers are single, and will turn to their family, their friends or their community to offer them support. But equally do not worry if those in your network are not always available – we link our carers up with others who foster for us locally, so you will never feel on your own.

Do I have to live in a house?

Whether you live in a house or a flat doesn't matter, but the property should be in your name. Ideally, each child or young person should have their own bedroom. Babies up to the age of three can stay in your room in their own bed or cot, and sometimes siblings can share, depending on their sex and age.

Foster care for every need



There are various types of foster care, each fulfilling different needs. If you choose to Foster, you may want to consider the type of fostering that best suits your circumstance. Here are some examples of the type of fostering you might be approved for:

Long term placements – Provide a stable home for children who cannot return to their birth families but are not going to be adopted. You will care for them until adulthood.

Mockingbird fostering – This innovative foster care model involves carers forming a group and using an extended family model which involves peer support, sleepovers, group outings and fostering as part of a community.

Short term placements – Care for children temporarily while plans are made for their future - usually spanning weeks or months, and often whilst courts are still deciding the long-term plans for the child.

Bridging placements – Work with a young person as they plan and prepare to join an adoptive or long-term placement, or during times of need.

Emergency placements – Be on call to receive unforeseen emergency placements for individual or sibling groups, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This role is normally covered by a highly experienced foster carer, and is the carers choice to support us in this way, if they are experienced and able to do so.

Parent and child placements – This involves taking in a child and their mother and/or father to provide guidance and develop their parenting skills. Many Parent and Child placements end when a parent returns to their own home with their children, having successfully cared for their children together in foster placement.

Solo placements – These provide a higher level of support and supervision for children whose needs are very specific and complex. Where this is agreed to, we will compensate you for caring for just one child and also provide additional support. Sometimes a solo placement may be a specialist step-down placement where a child is ready to leave residential care and re-integrate into a loving family setting.

Remand foster placements – Carers who look after young offenders on a short-term basis, sometimes just overnight. Placements can be made with very little notice, maybe on the same day. Alternatively, placements may be made on a more planned basis, for example for young people leaving custody. This is for highly experienced foster carers, or for those transferring from a similar role, who wish to foster. Extra support will be provided for those who wish to become remand foster carers.



What to do next?

Short breaks foster placements –

Very short-term care for children with disabilities or additional needs to help support a family. This may mean looking after a child or a sibling group for anything from a couple of days, weekends, to a week or two at a time sometimes on a regular basis. You will get to know the child and the family over a long period of time and become a regular and familiar support to the family, caring for the child/ren at regular planned intervals, to help maintain their ability to stay at home for the long term.

To summarise – Sometimes a foster carer might care for a variety of children with different circumstances, so don't worry too much about choosing a type of fostering to pursue. The above is just to give you an idea about the fostering role, and what is sometimes asked of you. But please don't worry, you will always have the right to say yes or no when we share a referral with you, and you will be able to say what is right for you and your family.

You can discuss these options further during your initial visit, attendance at Skills to Foster, or throughout your assessment.

Why not give us a call and start your fostering journey today?

Our staff will be happy to answer any questions you may have and will give you the time to make an informed decision as to whether fostering is right for you. We can send an expert social worker to your home at a time that suits you, to help answer any questions you may have.

And remember: you don't need a degree or years of working in childcare; you don't even need to have been a parent.

You just need to have the room in your home, and the room in your heart, to care for a child – and we will do the rest.

Call us today, and do something amazing:
020 8227 5988

Or visit:
fostering.lbbd.gov.uk

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