

FAQs

There may be questions you'd like to ask before you take the next step. Here are some of our most common questions. If there is anything else you want to know, call: 020 8359 6274 or email us on: fostering@barnet.gov.uk, our team will be more than happy to help.

What space do I need at home?

If you want to foster children over the age of two you need to have a spare bedroom for the foster child to stay in. Non-related fostered children cannot share a bedroom with each other, or with you or your own children. There must also always be a bedroom for your own children. We cannot allow your own children to share with you in order for a room to be freed up for fostering.

Will I have to give up my job to foster?

You can work, however you must be at home and available for the children in your care as needed, including before and after school and in holiday periods. You must also be free to attend training and meetings. We offer support to foster carers during holiday periods.

Fostering can throw up unexpected demands; even if the fostering household has two adults sharing the foster care responsibilities, it is important to have a good support network who can help out.

How will fostering affect my own children?

Fostering involves the whole family so it's really important that your children are happy for you to foster. As part of our application process your children will be invited to meet other children whose parents foster and find out about what fostering will mean for them.

It can sometimes be hard for children to share their parents and live with children who previously have led very different lives. However, many children also say that they have really enjoyed fostering and that they have learnt a lot from it. Some go on to be foster carers themselves.

How long does the application process take?

We aim for six months from your application to approval as a foster carer. Sometimes it can take longer. However, if you are an experienced foster carer we aim for four months.

How will I be matched with children?

We will suggest a child or children who we feel would be a good match for you and your family and discuss the situation with you. It is your decision whether to go ahead. Some fostering families agree to a close match with their religion or culture. The assessment process will help decide which children will work best for you, your family and your skills and experience.

Is there an upper age limit?

No.

I am not originally from the UK can I still foster?

We need foster carers from all backgrounds and cultures. However:

- if you are a non-EU citizen you will need to have indefinite leave to remain in the UK
- as part of the application process we need to be able to do background checks for the last five years, and if you have not lived in the UK for five or more years we need to be able to get this information from your previous country of residence

- fostering involves working and communicating with lots of people so you will need a working level of written and spoken English.

I or my partner got into trouble with the police when he/she was young. Will this stop us fostering?

Not necessarily. Not all criminal offences will disqualify you from fostering, such as minor offences or offences committed a long time ago. It is important to be honest with us from the beginning; we can then discuss it with you and give you an answer.

Some offences automatically disqualify people from becoming foster carers. For example, any convictions for offences against a child within the meaning of s26 (1) of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, or any other offence involving bodily injury to a child; or any convictions for offences relating to importing indecent photographs of children, or offences under s7 of the Sex Offenders Act 1997 (relating to sexual offences against children abroad).

I am a smoker. Will I be able to foster?

We expect our foster carers to promote a healthy lifestyle, and to provide a smoke free environment and not smoke in the presence of a fostered child.

We will not approve you to be a foster carer of children under five if you smoke in the home or members of your household smoke in rooms or vehicles used by the child.

Can we adopt a child we are fostering?

Possibly yes. If the plan for a child in your care is adoption and you want to be considered, we will think with you about whether this is appropriate. If so, an additional assessment process will be required.

If you would like to support a child right through to adulthood, why not consider becoming a long term/permanent foster carer?