



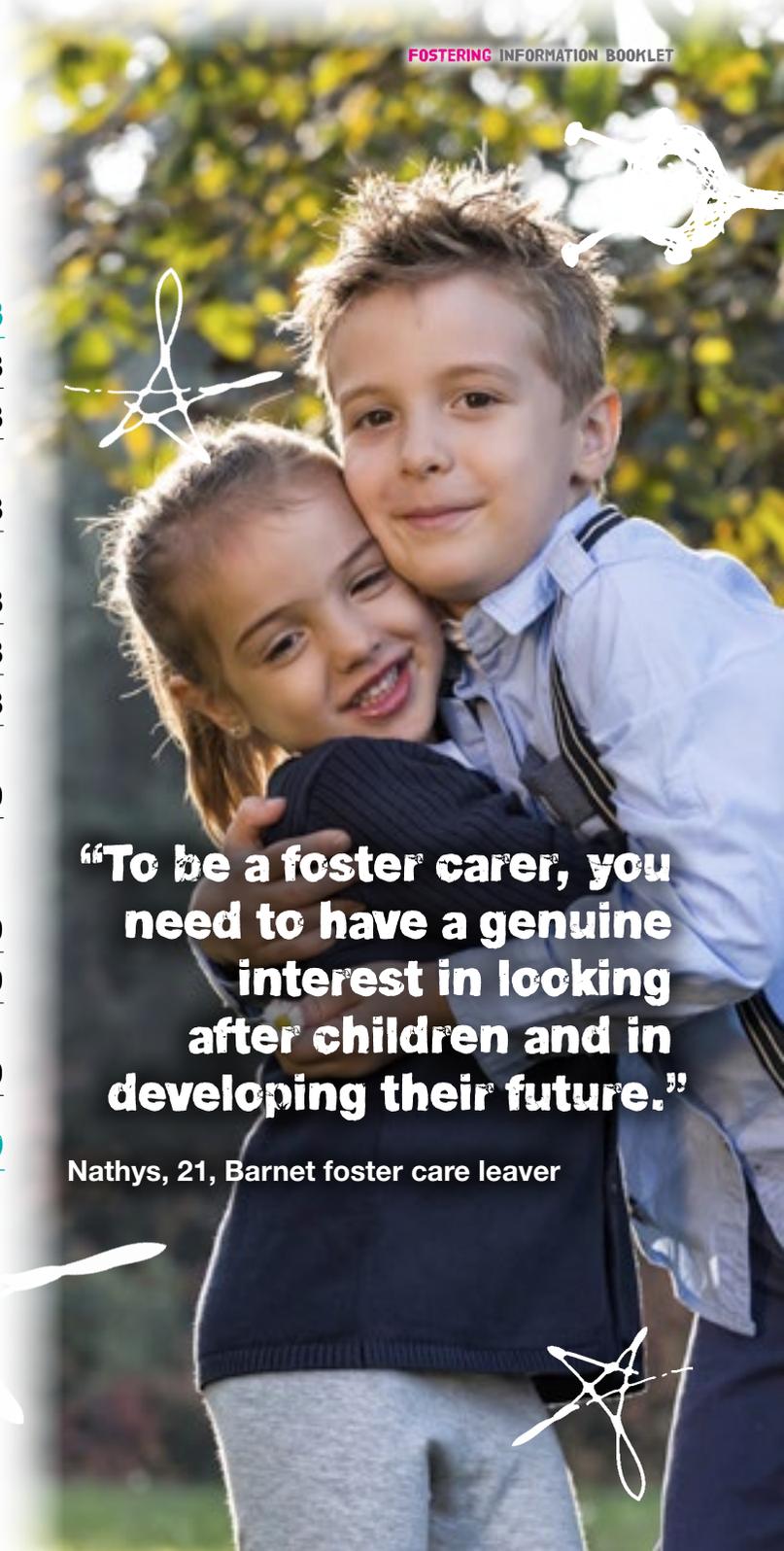
JOIN OUR **BARNET**
NIC  **FAMILY**

FOSTERING
INFORMATION BOOKLET



Contents

What is fostering?	4	FAQs	18
Why become a foster carer with Barnet?	5	What space do I need at home?	18
Can I foster?	8	Will I have to give up my job to foster?	18
Foster carer job description	9	How will fostering affect my own children?	18
Responsibilities for the child/young person	9	How long does the application process take?	18
Mansoor's story	10	How will I be matched with children?	18
Types of foster care	11	Is there an upper age limit?	18
Short term fostering	11	I am not originally from the UK can I still foster?	19
Long term/permanent fostering	11	I or my partner got into trouble with the police when he/she was young. Will this stop us fostering?	19
The support and rewards	12	I am a smoker. Will I be able to foster?	19
Sonia and Martine's story	14	Can we adopt a child we are fostering?	19
Your foster journey	16	Ready to take the next step?	20
Step 1	16		
Step 2	16		
Step 3	16		
Step 4	17		



“To be a foster carer, you need to have a genuine interest in looking after children and in developing their future.”

Nathys, 21, Barnet foster care leaver

Thank you for taking an interest in fostering a Barnet child. This booklet aims to give you an introduction to fostering and how we will support you every step of the way.

Our foster carers tell us they feel a real sense of achievement when they take a child into their home. They tell us they love seeing how children blossom once they realise they are accepted and feel nurtured, safe and secure.

We have a wonderful family of foster carers in Barnet and you can meet them for friendly advice and support – after all, they're the best people to answer any questions you may have.

We also have a buddy system where you are paired with one of our experienced foster carers for one-to-one support.

Perhaps you are considering fostering as a career you can have from home, or are newly retired or considering fostering alongside what you already do?

If you have any questions for a member of our team, please call 020 8359 6274, or email: fostering@barnet.gov.uk and we'll be glad to help, or visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/fostering to find out about our no obligation information sessions and how you can speak with one of our foster carers.



“I can help change the lives of vulnerable children. I feel useful to the community and society.”

John, Barnet foster carer for 19 years

What is fostering?

Sometimes a child or siblings are unable to live with their parents or people they already know. This can be for a variety of reasons such as family illness, physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect, a disability, arriving as an unaccompanied child from abroad, or a breakdown in family relations.

When this happens, it's our job at Barnet Council to find foster placements for every child in Barnet who needs fostering, for however long is needed.

It is our duty to find a suitable and nurturing home for that child to live, where the child feels confident and learns how to make safe, trusting relationships.

Like any child, fostered children need love, security and a warm, stable home environment so that they can thrive. That is why we need people like you to care for them until they can go back to their families, on to a new permanent family, or live independently.

You can have a huge impact on a child's life by supporting and caring for them in your home.



99%
of our foster
carers would
recommend
fostering for Barnet
to their friends and family

Why become a foster carer with Barnet?

We want to find local carers. We always try to place children with one of our own foster carers before considering foster carers who are with other fostering agencies.

We are a local rather than a national organisation so:

- you will be changing the lives of children within our local community
- if you are caring for a school-aged child they will probably be attending a local school
- most children in care have regular contact sessions with their birth family. Our contact centre, where most of these sessions take place, is in Barnet
- other Barnet foster carers will live locally to you, making it easy to help each other out
- training courses, support groups and social events will be within easy reach
- both your supervising social worker and your foster child's social worker will be based within the borough so they can work together to support you
- working in partnership with local schools, health, voluntary and council services on a regular basis means we can offer you all round support.



"A foster carer should be kind and give children a loving home, so we are part of their family and treated the same as their own children."

Harmony, 17



***“I’m the person that’s
there to open the door
for them when they return
home from school and the
person who helps them find
their way in life.”***

Jennifer, Barnet foster carer for 21 years

Jennifer's story

My parents were foster carers, so I had a passion, desire and insight to replicate their good work. As a result, I started fostering 21 years ago when my daughter was 12 years old.

I get a lot of enjoyment and fun out of fostering, it's rewarding and I couldn't live without it. It's my life now and all I've ever wanted to do. I used to work as a local authority housing officer and feel that some of the skills I used there help me now.

Over the years, I've fostered both boys and girls of all ages up to 18, and currently look after two teenagers. I prefer to look after teenagers because they keep me busy and up to date with the outside world! I can work with them and teach them new skills like cooking, budgeting, and help with their education.

I'm the person that's there to open the door for them when they return home from school and the person who helps them find their way

in life. It's my job to give every child I look after structure and boundaries and steer them away from danger. One young person actually said: 'Thank you for telling me off. I've never had that before.'

I like working with Barnet Council. They meet my needs and the training is absolutely fantastic and of a very high standard. Barnet have developed my skills and they take a personal interest in me. We foster carers work with Barnet as one unit, achieving the same goal in the interests of the child. I now pass on my skills to other foster carers as a buddy. The main thing, though, is that I can always rely on Barnet and feel safe and supported by them.

If I met someone who wanted to foster I'd say without a doubt: do it. It's giving something back to society and I take comfort from knowing I'm doing something worthwhile. That one person I help will

be an example to others and hopefully give something back to society themselves.



Can I foster?

We want your life experiences and practical understanding of children and their needs.

However, some people who ask about fostering may need to improve their skills, such as in English literacy or caring for children in a certain age group. We will do our best to help you with this.

We can arrange for you to have an informal chat with one of our team or with one of our foster carers. Just call us on 020 8359 6274 or email: fostering@barnet.gov.uk



“We long term foster three siblings aged seven to 10 years old. For us, keeping them together was first and foremost. That, and supporting them so they can have positive family memories from their time with us.”
Amanda and Steve, Barnet foster carers for six years

Foster carer job description

To provide a safe, caring and nurturing environment for a child, promote their health, and emotional and social wellbeing.

You will make a positive contribution to the futures of children and young people by providing them with a safe place where they can develop and achieve.

Responsibilities for the child/young person

Provide a home where the child/young person in your care is safe from harm and abuse and that they know how to get help should they need it.

Provide appropriate emotional warmth, structure and boundaries so a child can develop their potential.

Give support in their education and development of life skills.

Make sure they have a positive understanding of their origin, religion and culture.

Promote contact with the child/young person's family, if appropriate.

Act as an advocate for the child/young person in your care.

Attend meetings about the child/young person. This requires keeping written records, contributing to reports and keeping information that is sensitive and confidential.

Work as part of a team. You will be supported throughout to communicate effectively with the child/young person, with their social workers, their birth families and others involved in their care. You will need to work within our guidelines, policies and procedures.

Help prepare the child/young person who is moving on to another placement or independent living.

Commit time to attend appropriate training and development opportunities to develop your skills.



Mansoor's story

I joined my foster family when I was 14. I owe much of my life and the origins of my values to my beloved foster family, in particular to my wonderful foster carer Gillian, who brought me up with much love and care.

She and her family welcomed me from the start. I'm incredibly close to Gillian - she's like a mother to me and I shall be forever grateful to her.

Gillian showed me what I need to do to go far in life, showing a keen interest in my education. She was very involved in my school, supporting me when I was head boy and attending parent's evenings. She made sure I was in bed by 10pm every night! She and my foster sister came to my recent graduation when I gained a first class law degree from Middlesex University.

It's my foster family that taught me about the importance of being a part of society. I want to be a barrister and have recently been awarded a scholarship that will fund my training at City Law School. I'd like to practise human rights law and family law because I want to help improve society and give something back to my community.

It's also my ambition to enter into politics and I'm currently an intern at the House of Lords with Lord Alderdice.

Gillian has a strong sense of right and wrong and instilled that in me. She also gave me a positive mind set. Allan, Gillian's fiancé, is like a father figure to me and has also helped to shape my view of the world. He's an incredibly good cook and encouraged me to take part in domestic tasks around the house. My foster sisters consider me to be their brother and when I joined their family, Samantha took me out with all her friends to different places.

If someone is thinking about becoming a foster carer, they need to be able to give a child a loving and compassionate home, and treat that child as their own, including them in decisions that are made about them.

I'm immensely grateful to Barnet for providing me with generous and helpful opportunities so as to reach my potential. Every child can go far and help enrich our society if they are shown appreciation, love and understanding.





“It’s my foster family that taught me about the importance of being a part of society.”

Types of foster care

Children in care have different needs so we try to meet these with different types of fostering. You could be approved for short or long term fostering or both.

Short term fostering

This is also called task-centred fostering. You can look after a child for anything from a few days or weeks to a couple of years, while we are working with the child’s family to try and get the child back home, or if this is not possible then on to a permanent placement such as adoption.

Long term/permanent fostering

Sometimes children will not be able to return to live with their own families or within their networks. If adoption or placement with someone within their family network is not appropriate, then long term fostering is considered. This will allow a child to grow up in a safe and supported family environment, usually whilst retaining the connection with their birth family. This generally applies to children aged eight plus.



The support and rewards

We want you and your family to feel fully supported. Here are just some of the benefits we offer. Visit www.barnet.gov.uk/fostering to see a full list of how we will support you.

Support for you

- a dedicated social worker to provide you with support and supervision
- we will 'buddy' you with an experienced Barnet foster carer who will support you during your fostering journey
- a free, comprehensive and on-going training programme
- a skill-based payment and a maintenance fee for each child you look after
- birthday and holiday allowances for each child you look after
- a planned break each year
- flexible phone or at home consultation with our dedicated looked after children's nurse to support you to understand the health needs of the children you look after
- out of hours support with access to an experienced social care manager

- local, regular support groups where you can meet other foster carers and discuss issues and topics of interest to you all
- support from other foster carers and the Barnet Foster Carers' Association, and fun social events
- membership of the Fostering Network, an independent national charity, which offers free support, discounts, training and events, visit: www.fostering.net

Support for the child you look after

- support from our Virtual School in tracking the educational attainment of each child and support from the designated teacher and education staff
- access to free activities provided by our Youth and Communities Service for your foster children, for example, during summer holidays
- free leisure pass for Barnet Council leisure centres

- access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for children who need it
- your foster child can join our children in care council, the Role Model Army, visit: www.rolemodelarmy.org.uk
- access to the Duke of Edinburgh award for every looked after child, either through school or the council's Youth and Communities Service.

**Our carers stay within
our Barnet foster family for
very much longer than the
national average**



“The best part of fostering is seeing how a child progresses. There’s a lot of reward and satisfaction.”

I’m lucky because my family and I always **keep in touch** with the children I’ve fostered. It’s lovely to still have relationships with them.”

Amanda, Barnet foster carer for six years





“If someone was thinking about fostering, we’d tell them to have an open mind and be prepared to learn a lot about children and childcare.”

Martine and Sonia, Barnet foster carers for two years

Sonia and Martine's story

We wanted to make a positive impact on children's lives and chose to foster with Barnet after doing a lot of research.

We've been fostering siblings for two years and in that time we have been involved with 17 children, from birth to 11-years-old.

We have a lot of fun with the children we look after, as well as giving them a loving, caring, safe and stable home life. We allow them to be children and give them exciting opportunities, while setting routines and boundaries and providing healthy food. We get a lot of satisfaction from fostering especially knowing we are impacting positively on little lives. We also get to go to the zoo a lot!

Martine is a primary school teacher and really understands the importance of the fostering service, and Sonia's last full time job was managing a print company in the city and she also worked as a Special Constable for the Met Police.

If someone was thinking about fostering, we'd tell them to have an open mind and be prepared to learn a lot about children and childcare. It's not easy at times, but there is so much support within Barnet Council, you always know someone can help if you need it.

Barnet knows the flexibility a foster carer may need in their personal lives. If you work hard for them, they will work hard for you. They are also a great bunch of people to work with!



Your foster journey

To ensure all children and young people we place are safe and secure, we have a rigorous process we go through with you before you can become an approved foster carer.

We will advise you about all the support you will receive from us.

There are four main steps:

Step 1

A member of our fostering team will visit you and your family at home to discuss your potential for fostering. After the visit, we will let you know if we think you could be a foster carer, and if you are happy to continue, we will invite you to take step 2.



Step 2

You and your partner (if applicable) will be invited to attend our local three day Skills to Foster training course. Courses are held during the week and at weekends.

The course is run by one of our foster carers and a member of our team. You will also get a chance to chat to young people who have experienced foster care.

We also run a separate half day session for your own children, during which children aged 5+ can meet some of our foster carers' own children to talk about what fostering may mean for them.

There is an application form you will need to complete either before or after the course. We can help you with this.

Step 3

This step is called the 'Form F' assessment. Steps 2 and 3 may happen at the same time. Step 3 is when we explore many areas of your life to ensure that you and others in your household will be right for fostering. We will support you throughout and you can also attend our monthly support groups to talk with some of our foster carers.

You will meet with one of our social workers over an average period of four months. The social worker will collect information about your skills, attitudes and experience in relation to fostering.

Some applicants may find this part of the process is very in-depth. However, we have to be sure that children and young people in care will be safe and well looked after. We don't expect anyone to be perfect; we want to be sure you have the potential to develop your skills as a foster carer.

As part of this process, we will need to carry out various checks and the social worker will fully explain these to you.

At the end of step 3, your social worker will write a report about your application. This goes to Barnet Council's fostering panel for a recommendation that you are approved. We do not normally put people forward for the panel unless we are confident they are ready to be approved.

Step 4

You and your social worker will attend the fostering panel. The panel may ask you a few questions.

After your approval is signed off, you are ready for your first foster child to arrive.

If you would like to find out more about any of these steps, call 020 8359 6274 or email: fostering@barnet.gov.uk or ask to speak to one of our foster carers and we can arrange this for you. Alternatively, visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/fostering for more details.



97%
of people who
completed steps
1 to 4 were approved as
a foster carer by us



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: fostering@barnet.gov.uk. Our team will be more than happy to help. Alternatively visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/fostering

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 able 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.

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 even go on to be foster carers themselves.

How long does the application process take?

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

Read pages 16 – 17 to find out more about the approval process.

How will I be matched with children?

The assessment process will help you and us decide which children will work best for you, your family and your skill set. We will then 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.

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 more details, view the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 online or please contact us.

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

We expect our foster carers to promote a healthy lifestyle, 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 becomes 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?



“Fostering can be very rewarding and positively challenging. It has heightened my awareness of how different young people’s lives are. I’ve learnt that you shouldn’t judge a child, instead, watch things unfold in time.”

Basil, fostered eight children with Barnet over three years

Ready to take the next step?

If you feel that fostering could be right for you please contact us to discuss arranging an initial assessment visit. Remember, we will support you every step of the way.

If you feel there is anything you want to discuss further with a member of our fostering team or a foster carer, please get in touch using one of the methods below.



FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL: 020 8359 6274
EMAIL: FOSTERING@BARNET.GOV.UK
OR VISIT: WWW.BARNET.GOV.UK/FOSTERING