

Find out about
fostering



Fostering for Hillingdon Council



HILLINGDON
LONDON

www.hillingdon.gov.uk/fostering

Be the one... to show the

Thank you for your interest in fostering for Hillingdon Council.

This information booklet includes information about fostering including why children and young people need foster carers, what foster carers do and how to become a foster carer for Hillingdon Council. We hope that it will help you decide if fostering is right for you.

We need foster carers who are able to care for children and young people of all ages, backgrounds and with different needs.

What is fostering?

Fostering is looking after someone else's child or children in your own home when their family is unable to care for them. Foster carers provide a stable family life for a child, while the council works with their family to try to resolve issues so that the child can hopefully return home or move to live with a family member.

Sometimes children are unable to return home and will need to have a permanent family to care for them either through adoption or long-term fostering.

"You can see the children transforming and their self-esteem just grows. It's very rewarding."

Foster carers Kerry and Paul from Hillingdon

Why do children need to be fostered?

Some of the reasons children need to be looked after and come into care are:

- a temporary family crisis
- parents are physically or mentally unwell
- parental misuse of drugs or alcohol
- parents are unable to cope with caring for their children
- the children have been neglected or abused
- children or young people have come into the UK as unaccompanied minors and need a safe place to stay

Any of these experiences may have had an impact on the child's physical and emotional development.

Who can foster?

People from all walks of life can foster children and young people.

We welcome applications from the whole community: single people, married and same sex couples, adults from any ethnicity, culture or religion (or no religion), who rent their home, live in social housing or own their homes.

What does a foster carer do?

Our foster carers do an amazing job in protecting, supporting and caring for children and young people. They help them to grow and develop by providing a stable, caring and nurturing family environment whilst they cannot live with their family. Most children who need to be looked after will need additional support to cope with previous difficult experiences. They may have additional needs or a disability.

Babies, children and young people up to the age of 18 years may need to be looked after and be in the care of Hillingdon Council.

Foster carers can look after single children, brothers and sisters and some foster carers look after several children at a time.

Could you foster for Hillingdon Council?

- you will need to be an adult aged 25 and above
- you can be from any social, ethnic, cultural or religious background
- you can be single, married or living with a partner, and you can be in a same-sex relationship
- you can be a parent or not but it's important that you have some previous relevant childcare experience
- you will be committed to caring for someone else's child
- you will have time and space in your life to offer a home to a child in need
- you will have suitable accommodation to foster: this means a spare bedroom for a child aged two years and above (carers for babies up to two years old can have a cot placed in the foster carer's bedroom if there is sufficient space)
- you will agree to a police check (Disclosure and Barring Service), health assessment and checks with your local authority
- you will need to be non-smokers if fostering children under the age of five

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You do not need to:

- own your home, but you do need a secure rental tenancy
- live in Hillingdon, but live close enough so you are within travelling distance to the children's schools and other appointments you will attend with the child in your care
- be in employment, but you do need to be financially stable

A step-by-step guide to becoming a foster carer

Contact us

You can contact us in one of the following ways:

- email: fost-adopt@hillingdon.gov.uk
- register your interest at: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/fostering
- telephone: 0800 783 1298
- visit Hillingdon Civic Centre in Uxbridge to see a member of the team during office hours Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm
- attend the monthly information evening at the Civic Centre
Details are on: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/fostering
- come and meet us at an event in the community: details are on the website and in local press adverts

When you contact us we will respond to your enquiry within two days to give you more information about fostering. If it looks like fostering may be right for you we will arrange to visit you at home.

The purpose of the visit is to provide you with more information and find out more about your interest in fostering. This will help you and us to decide if fostering is right for you and your family.

Following the visit we will contact you to let you know if we plan to continue with your enquiry and for you to let us know your decision about moving to the next stage.

There are two stages to becoming a foster carer.

"Fostering is the most wonderful and rewarding thing we have ever done. If you're thinking about fostering, whatever your background; don't count yourself out. Try it, it could be for you. It was for us."

Foster carers Alan and Lesley
from Hillingdon



Stage one

Application

We will ask you to complete an application form, giving us consent to undertake the necessary checks to foster.

Checks and references

We will start a series of checks as soon as possible including: the local authority, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS - police), any organisation where you have undertaken voluntary work with children, personal references (three in total, one referee may be related to you), education if you have school aged children and with your employer (if applicable).

All adults age 18 and above in the household will need DBS checks. You will be asked to make an appointment with your general practitioner to have a medical.

Preparation training

All fostering applicants are invited to attend preparation training called Skills to Foster. This is an opportunity to learn alongside other applicants, to find out more about the fostering role and for you to decide if fostering is right for you. If it is a joint application, both applicants are required to attend. Courses are held at regular intervals throughout the year. Social workers, foster carers and young people with care experience provide the training.

Following this, we will meet with you to talk about moving to the next stage of assessment, stage two. If this is right for you and your family, a social worker will be assigned to work with you to complete the final stage of preparation and assessment of you as foster carers.

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Stage two

The Form F Assessment (also known as the Home Study)

This will help prepare you further for fostering. Your social worker will visit you on a regular basis to complete the assessment with you and members of your household. You will receive regular feedback from your assessing social worker and together you will determine if fostering is right for you and your family.

Your assessing social worker will prepare a report based on the work you have undertaken together, this is called a Form F.

Our aim is to complete stage two in four months, but this can vary according to individual circumstances.

Approval as a foster carer: Hillingdon Fostering and Adoption Panel

To be approved as a foster carer your Form F report is presented to the independent Fostering and Adoption Panel. You will be invited to attend the panel with your assessing social worker. The panel will be familiar with your report. The panel will consider whether you are suitable to become a foster carer for Hillingdon Council.

Agency Decision Maker approval

The panel recommendation will be sent to the Agency Decision Maker who will review the papers sent to panel and their recommendation, so that they can make the final decision about your approval.

If this is successful, you are then approved as a foster carer with Hillingdon Council.

Fostering for Hillingdon Council

You will receive a welcome pack and be assigned a supervising social worker who is there to support and work with you now that you are ready to care for children in your home.

Placing a child with you

We will contact you when we have a child that fits well with your family and is well-matched to your skills and knowledge. This could be within a few days or weeks of your approval as a foster carer.



Financial support

Foster carers receive a weekly allowance for the child in their care. This covers the costs of caring for a child and includes a professional fee to recognise the skills and work of foster carers. Foster carers are self-employed.

Support for foster carers

At Hillingdon Council we know how important it is to feel supported as a foster carer.

We offer the following to all our foster carers:

- regular visits from a supervising social worker
- regular telephone contact by a supervising social worker
- out-of-hours service support to foster carers in the evenings, weekends and bank holidays

- access to the Hillingdon Foster Carer Association (HFCA) - peer support by in house foster carers
- monthly foster carer support group
- regular foster carers' newsletter
- annual foster carers' celebration
- access to clinical psychologists and other professionals
- free membership to the Fostering Network
- a wide range of training courses designed to support foster carers develop their confidence, knowledge and skills

"Most of the young people we have looked after, supported and encouraged have gone on to do well at school and in their careers."

Foster carers Fikadu and Negasi
from Hillingdon

Useful contacts

CoramBAAF

Coram Campus
41 Brunswick Square
London WC1N 1AZ
Phone: 020 7520 0300

CoramBAAF Advice Line

Phone: 0300 222 5775, Monday to Friday from 9am to 1pm
Email: advice@corambaaf.org.uk

The Fostering Network

87 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8HA
Phone: 020 7620 6400
Email: info@fostering.net

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Phone: 0300 123 1231, Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Contact us to find out more

Fostering Service
Civic Centre
High Street
Uxbridge
UB8 1UW
Telephone: 0800 783 1298
Email: fost-adopt@hillingdon.gov.uk
Website: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/fostering