



**Children's Safeguarding and
Social Work
Fostering Service**
General information

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1 Role and responsibilities

Camden's Fostering Service is the fostering agency for the London Borough of Camden and is responsible for:

- the recruitment, preparation, assessment and approval of prospective foster carers
- the training, support, supervision, review and continuing professional development of Camden foster carers
- matching looked after children with suitable foster carers who are able to meet the child's needs and delivering good outcomes
- ensuring the safety and welfare of fostered children
- carrying out Camden's role as corporate parents to looked after children
- managing Camden's fostering provision.

The aims and guiding principles of the service can be found in the service Statement of Purpose. [link](#)

2 Legislative framework

The following legislation and guidance underpins the Fostering Service's policy, procedure and sets out standards of service and how the Fostering service will to carry out statutory fostering functions and discharge the Council's legal duties.

- The Children Act 1989
- Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children and Young Person's Act 2008
- Fostering Regulations 2011
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Fostering National Minimum Standards

The Fostering service also follows the Fostering Network code of practice and BAAF forms and guidance regarding the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management and support of foster carers.

The CWDC Training, Support and Development Standards for foster Carers are the standards used in training and support of newly approved foster carers, providing a structured framework for their personal and professional development over a period of 2 years.

3 Recruitment

Camden recognises that in order to provide an efficient fostering service that meets the diverse needs of those children requiring placement, it is vital to recruit a wide range of high calibre carers who reflect the local community, are able to meet the identified needs of Looked After Children and match their cultural profile.

Camden aims to recruit a diverse pool of foster carers to offer a greater choice of placements. This should lead to better matching decisions, which will contribute to improved placement stability and ultimately, lead to better outcomes for looked after children. It will also allow more children to remain in the borough so that they can maintain close links with their family and community.

Recruitment of foster carers needs to strike a balance between reaching as wide an audience as possible to increase the number of people expressing an interest in fostering and ensuring that those recruited are suitable to foster and likely to gain approval.

Camden has a clear recruitment strategy that incorporates findings from research and best practice and seeks to ensure the borough discharges its duty to provide sufficient and suitable accommodation for looked after children.

The structure and principles that inform the recruitment strategy are:

- A dedicated recruitment worker with responsibility for implementing the recruitment strategy, supervised by and working closely with the Fostering team manager.
- An inclusive recruitment policy that welcomes applications from a wide range of people, is equalities-based and values the diversity of the borough.
- High quality management information informing recruitment goals and targets that reflects the needs of the service.

- A robust, long-term strategy of on-going recruitment with clear goals and targets and a written action plan detailing how targets will be met.
- Maintaining a high profile for fostering within the borough both with the public and within the Council's decision-making structure.
- Recruitment that is based on the local area, using close links with local community groups.
- Recruitment that utilises the expertise of current foster carers.
- Targeted recruitment drives for specific profiles of carers needed to match the culture, ethnicity, religion and language of those children needing placements.
- Targeted recruitment drives for specific profiles of carers needed to offer families with disabled children short breaks from continuous caring.
- Monthly open evenings where people can meet with members of Fostering team and find out more about fostering and applying to foster in Camden.
- Use of high quality communications materials such as advertisements and information leaflets providing relevant information for applicants.
- An information pack provided to applicants at the outset of their application so that they are fully informed about the role of foster carers and the process for assessing suitability, allowing them to make an informed decision as to whether they feel fostering is right for them.
- Clear timescales for processing applications and moving applicants on to the next step in order to increase the number of applicants who continue through the assessment process and gain approval as a foster carer.
- A campaign that focuses on the professional nature of foster care, including details of financial rewards, career pathways, training and support provided.
- A dedicated free phone number and email address for easy contact, and a computerised system of recording registration of interest that allows fostering workers to follow up any enquiries.

- A dedicated website address containing all relevant information and enabling individuals to contact the Fostering Service.
- Constant review of campaigns to find out what works well.

Camden's recruitment strategy sets out details of goals and targets and what action will be taken in order to achieve these. The strategy is reviewed and updated on a yearly basis.

4 Eligibility criteria

In line with the Council's equalities and valuing diversity policy, Camden considers applicants wishing to be approved as foster carers irrespective of age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability, providing they can meet the needs of children who will be placed with them.

However, in order to ensure that foster carers are able to meet the needs of the child, the following points must be taken into account when dealing with applications:

4.1 Age

Applicants to become foster carers must be at least 25 years of age. Generally, there is no upper age restriction for applicants, but as age is linked to general levels of health, fitness and energy, this may need to be taken into account where applicants are over the age of 60, and an earlier medical report sought to decide on whether to continue with the application.

4.2 Marital status

Applications should be considered regardless of the applicant's marital status, and cohabitees are welcome to apply. However, where there is an application from a couple to be joint foster carers, social workers should ensure that the relationship is stable, of at least 3 years duration and likely to be permanent.

4.3 Single applicants

Camden will consider single applicants of either gender, and suitability to foster will be considered in the same way as for all applicants, with the emphasis being on their ability to meet the needs of fostered children.

4.4 Sexuality

Applications should be considered regardless of the applicant's sexuality, whether they are single applicants or same sex couples.

4.5 Health requirements

All applicants will undergo a full medical assessment. A specific medical condition will not necessarily be a bar to approval as a foster carer, but general health should be a key feature of the assessment and applicants should have a reasonable expectation of retaining good health in the future.

In cases where an applicant has a disability, the assessment should address how the disability will affect parenting and whether any support is required in order to care for a child.

4.6 Smoking

Camden works to the BAAF practice note 51 and aims to reduce the risk of smoking to looked after children and foster carers. Assessing social workers should actively encourage any applicants who smoke to consider the risks to them and the children placed with them and take steps to stop smoking.

Applicants who smoke will not be considered to foster:

- children under 5
- children with certain health problems, for example asthma or other respiratory conditions
- children who come from non-smoking households
- older children who have asked not to be placed in smoking households.

When applicants give up smoking, there will be a period of 6 months before a child under 5 is placed with them.

Otherwise, applicants should undertake to follow the guidance from the National Safety Council on reducing children's exposure to smoke by:

- not smoking around the child, or allowing anyone else to do so
- not allowing anyone to smoke anywhere in the house or car.

4.7 Applicants with children

Applications from prospective foster carers with children of their own should be welcomed given their own experience of child-care, which will provide clear evidence of their parenting skills.

However, applicants should be encouraged to consider the impact of fostering on their own children. The age of the applicant's own children may affect the age range for which they can be approved to foster.

4.8 Accommodation requirements

The applicant's accommodation must offer a safe environment and must provide enough space for everyone living there. Ideally, all children over the age of 3 should have their own room. However, Camden will allow siblings of the same sex and non-related children who are under the age of 8 to share a bedroom if all parties agree to this.

Decisions to allow children to share bedrooms will be based on a robust risk assessment and will not be authorised where there is a risk of bullying or a history of abuse.

4.9 Security of tenure

Applicants must have secure tenure on their home, being either Council or Housing Association tenants or owner-occupiers.

4.10 Right of residence in the UK

All applicants must have long-term right of residence in the UK, either because they are UK citizens, have right of abode or have indefinite leave to remain. It is also important that applicants intend to settle in the UK on a permanent basis (known as habitual residence).

Applicants will need to provide their passport in order to carry out DBS checks and where necessary, should provide any documentation to prove their right of residence.

4.11 Employment

Applicants do not have to be in employment, as long as they are able to offer a child a secure home. However, it is important that employment does not interfere with caring responsibilities and this will be dependent on the child's age.

4.12 Pets

Camden works to the BAAF practice note 42 on placing children with dog-owning families, and recognises that although dogs can present a risk to children, they can also provide benefits.

For reasons of safety, applications cannot be considered from anyone who owns a dog that is proscribed under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, which are:

- Pit bull terrier
- Japanese tosa
- Dogo Argentino
- Fila Brasileiro

Other breeds of dog kept by applicants may require assessment as part of the fostering assessment to establish the dog's experience of children and general disposition. The following breeds in particular may require careful consideration:

- Alsatian (German Shepherd)
- Rottweiler
- Doberman
- Bulldog
- Where there are more than 2 dogs ("a pack")

4.13 Criminal records

A person who is seeking approval as a foster carer will not be considered if they or any adult member of the household has been cautioned for, or convicted of any offences listed in schedule 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations and the following:

- an offence against a child which involves violence or bodily injury (other than common assault or battery)
- cruelty (to a child under 16)
- indecency
- abduction
- the supply of Class A drugs
- importation/possession of indecent photographs of a child under 16
- any sexual offence against a child unless the offence was contrary to sections 6, 12 or 13 or the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and the person concerned was under 20 when the offence was committed.

Other convictions will not necessarily preclude an application, but this will depend on the seriousness of the offence and how long ago it was committed. In cases of doubt or dispute, the matter will be referred to the Care Provision service manager, who may also consult the Agency Decision Maker.

4.14 Applicants from other boroughs

Camden accepts applications from residents of nearby boroughs as long as the foster home is within 20 minutes travelling distance from the child's school or their home. We will consider applications from applicants living close to Camden's borders in Islington, Hackney and Brent.

4.15 Applications from Camden councillors or employees

Camden accepts applications from Camden councillors and employees but social workers must consider whether there is a potential conflict of interest. Please refer below to section 6 for further details of this.

4.16 Transfers from other fostering providers

Camden accept transfers from foster carers who have been approved by other fostering providers, but would still deal with the transfer as for any enquiry from a member of the public. The transferee would be expected to undergo the usual processes of initial enquiry, initial visit, statutory checks, preparation group, assessment, and approval by Camden's Fostering and Permanence Panel.

Social workers should liaise with the current fostering provider to ensure that the applicants have given notice and to obtain relevant information about them.

5 Conflict of interest

Statutory guidance states that in considering an application to foster from an employee or councillor or a member of their household who works with or has contact with fostered children, the Fostering Service must ensure care is taken to avoid any possible conflict of interest.

For this reason, applications to foster cannot be considered from the following:

- Employees of the Supporting People Directorate

- Councillors who are members of the Corporate Parenting Group or Children's Services Committee

6 Monitoring and quality assurance

The LAC Head of Service, the Care Provision service manager and the Fostering manager, in conjunction with the LACCL service and the Quality Assurance Unit, are responsible for managing the fostering resource in Camden and ensuring the quality of the service.

The Fostering Service has developed various structures and systems in order to ensure compliance with the Fostering Regulations and the National Minimum Standards.

6.1 Management of the Fostering Service

Camden ensures that the Fostering Service is managed by a suitably qualified manager as set out in standard 17 of the National Minimum Standards and that a nominated deputy is available during any absence of the service manager. In the absence of the Fostering manager, the service is managed by the Care Provision service manager or a designated senior practitioner.

The Fostering manager and the Care Provision service manager regularly monitor management information, quality of care provided and all other matters listed in Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations.

6.2 Recording and management information

Recording of all work carried out by Children's Safeguarding and Social Work (CSSW), including fostering activities, and all management information systems are contained on the CSSW electronic case management system MOSAIC. All recording must comply with the division's recording policy.

[..\Case recording and access\Recording policy.doc](#)

Fostering social workers and LAC social workers should ensure that information is updated on the system regularly so that information on resources and performance is readily available.

MOSAIC provides the Fostering Service with a robust management system that is capable of producing management information in line with Schedule 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and enables managers to plan services and identify service gaps.

Access to MOSAIC records is restricted to staff on a need to know basis in order to ensure confidentiality, particularly for foster carers.

Fostering services ensure that a record is kept of any accidents and incidents occurring in foster placements and foster carers are provided with suitable templates for recording.

6.3 Fostering service staff

Camden has clear corporate policies and procedures on the recruitment of staff which should be followed by Fostering managers when recruiting to the service in order to ensure that workers have the necessary qualifications and comply with the requirements of Regulations 19 and 20 and Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

The service manager and Fostering manager work in partnership to identify gaps in service and ensure that there are enough staff to carry out all the statutory duties.

All staff in the Fostering Service should receive regular supervision and annual appraisals in accordance with the division's supervision and performance development policy. Staff who are new to Camden will be subject to a probationary period of 6 months. Please see the link below.
<..\..\Staffing policies\Supervision policies\Social worker supervision policy.doc>
<..\..\Staffing policies\Performance review appraisal documents>

The fostering team structure and working practices ensures that social workers receive supervision, support and advice from experienced senior practitioners and the fostering manager on a day to day basis so that issues can be dealt with promptly. On-going professional training is an expectation for all staff in line with the division's training and development strategy.

6.4 Foster carers

The recruitment and assessment of foster carers is carried out in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 to ensure careful vetting in order to safeguard children. The Fostering service also has procedures for the continued monitoring, training and review of foster carers by supervising social workers to ensure foster carers maintain high standards of care.

Complaints and allegations against carers should be dealt with under specific procedures and a record is kept by the Fostering Service, with notification to OFSTED where required under Schedule 7 of the Fostering Services Regulations.

The Fostering Service should ensure that all foster carers have a written foster care agreement that sets out their roles and responsibilities and covers all the matters listed in Schedule 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations.

Supervising social workers should work with LAC social workers to ensure that for each placement, there is a placement agreement meeting and placement agreement plan providing information for foster carers to help them care for the child.

6.5 Fostering and Permanence Panel, Independent Reviewing Officer and Agency Decision Maker

Camden's Fostering and Permanence Panel, the Independent Reviewing service and agency decision maker should ensure that there is independent scrutiny of the service's decisions and recommendations regarding the suitability of foster carers and their terms of approval.

7 Whistleblowing

The Fostering Service adheres to Camden's council-wide whistle-blowing policy, available at:

[Camden Essentials: Protected Disclosure \(Whistleblowing\)](#)

All staff and foster carers have a legal duty to raise concerns where they feel individuals or the Fostering Service in general are failing to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Where it is not possible to raise concerns within the service, staff and carers may report concerns to the following;

- Camden's lead officers for child protection or safeguarding where there are issues regarding the welfare of a child.
- Camden Council's confidential and independent help-line for protected disclosure on **0800 734199** or the Ofsted whistle-blowing line on **0300 123 3155** where there are issues regarding the Fostering Service's overall procedures around safeguarding.