

# Camden's fostering assessment: information for applicants

This leaflet provides information for anyone who is considering fostering in Camden. It explains how we assess applicants and the information we will need from you in order to make sure you and your family would be able to provide a safe and caring home for looked after children.

To make sure that we have the right people fostering for us, Camden has a legal duty to follow a strict assessment process that is based on 2 stages\*:

At **Stage 1** we need to gather information about you and your family so that we can establish whether:

- You and your household are suitable people to foster
- Your home can provide a safe and comfortable environment for a child
- You would be able to provide a good standard of care for a looked after child.

At **Stage 2** we carry out the formal assessment of your suitability to foster prior to referring to our Fostering Panel for a recommendation.

During **Stage 1**, we will:

- contact you to discuss your application and maybe visit you at home
- carry out a health and safety check on your home
- ask for a medical report on you to be completed by your GP
- carry out criminal record checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service on all adults living in your home over the age of 16
- carry out enquiries with your local authority about your family
- interview 3 personal referees who know you well including one who will be a family member.

You will be asked to complete a formal application form that gives us permission to get information about you from other organisations. We require your permission to carry out these checks but if you do not give us this permission we will not be able to progress your application.

Stage 1 also involves us giving you information about fostering and the kind of children who need foster care. We will invite you to attend a 3 day preparation course (Skills to Foster) so that you can get as much information about what it's like to foster.

This can help you make an informed judgement on whether fostering is for you and helps us to get an idea about whether you have the necessary skills, attitudes and experience to foster. At the end of this preparation group, we will meet with you to discuss how the group went and what you learnt about fostering.

During Stage 1, we will be making decisions on your suitability to foster and whether you should progress to Stage 2. By the end of Stage 1 we should have enough information about you to make a confident decision and progress to assessment.

However, we may decide during Stage 1 not to progress your application; this may happen following your initial enquiry or the home visit or because of the outcome of checks. You may decide yourself that fostering is not for you or that you want to re-apply at a later date.

We will always discuss with you the reasons why we cannot progress your application and give you advice on whether to re-apply in the future. If you are not happy with our decision at Stage 1, you can use Camden's complaints procedure to make a complaint but the Complaints Officer will only look at the way in which we made the decision, and not the decision itself.

During **Stage 2** your assessing social worker will meet with you on several occasions, normally at your home to gather information for the assessment. Couples who are being assessed jointly should be seen together and separately. Throughout the assessment you will be working in partnership with the assessing social worker to complete the report.

At the end of the assessment, the completed report will be submitted to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation and thereafter this is authorised by the Assistant Director who is Camden's decision maker.

**\*We aim to complete Stage 1 within 3 months and Stage 2 within 5 months. However, to avoid delay, we may begin the Stage 2 assessment before all the Stage 1 checks have been completed. Applicants should be aware that although we may begin the assessment process, we cannot complete the assessment report and proceed to the Fostering Panel until all Stage 1 checks have been completed.**