Fostering in Havering

How to become a foster carer for Havering
Introduction

Thank you for expressing an interest in becoming a foster carer for Havering. We are always looking for new people to join our group of successful foster carers who look after children and young people in the borough.

Fostering is about providing a caring and safe home for children and young people, who for various reasons cannot live with their own families.

There is no such thing as a typical foster carer. We welcome applications from all sections of the community, regardless of ethnicity, faith, age, sexuality, disability, background, marital or employment status. We are looking for people who have space in their home and heart to foster a vulnerable Havering child or young person.

There is no denying that fostering is a demanding job. You'll need to be patient, understanding and flexible.

Please take some time to read through this information leaflet. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have about fostering and encourage you to take the next step to becoming a foster carer for Havering.

To find out more please call us on 01708 434574 or complete an online form www.havering.gov.uk/fostering

What is fostering?

Fostering means caring for children and young people who cannot live with their own families.

The child/young person will live in your home for a period of time that could range from a few days, to several months, or in some cases several years. Some children return to their birth families, others may be supported through long-term fostering until they are ready to live independently and some are adopted.

When a child is placed with you, you will form part of the team around the child, working with social workers and other professionals to make sure the child gets the care they need.
Who needs to be fostered?

Fostering is for children and young people aged 0-18 years old living in Havering who cannot live with their family. Children need to be looked after for a variety of reasons, they may have experienced neglect or abuse. All children who come into our care have experienced loss.

There are many children and young people who need to be fostered so it is important that lots of different people work as a foster carers to provide homes for children.

Children who need to be fostered may be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single children</th>
<th>The children and young people who need looking after come from diverse backgrounds and cultures, therefore Havering is looking for foster carers to reflect all sections of our community.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children with disabilities</td>
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<td>Siblings</td>
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<td>Teenagers</td>
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What do foster carers do?

Foster carers help children to feel safe, healthy and happy. Moving into a foster home can be unsettling and confusing for a child. You’ll need to help them settle in by listening, understanding and offering a safe environment where they can understand why they’re living away from their birth parents.

Here is a list of some of the responsibilities you’ll have as a Havering foster carer:

Foster carers will:

- Welcome a child into your home and make them feel like part of your household and family life.
- Promote the healthy growth and development of the child to help them achieve more in all areas.
- Ensure that the children being looked after are encouraged in a positive way to understand their origins, religion and culture.
- Be committed to caring for a child and giving them your support for as long as they need it.

Providing a safe and caring environment to:

- Ensure that children are kept safe from harm and abuse and they know how to get help if they need it.
- Help children feel settled and secure through providing a stable family life.

Work as part of a team:

- With social workers, teachers and health professionals to support the child to achieve their full potential.
- Attend training sessions so you are equipped to help children with different care needs.
Could you be a Havering foster carer?

If you can tick off each of these areas then you are likely to have what is needed to foster for Havering.

Tick List

- A spare room in your home
- You live in Havering or a surrounding borough
- Aged over 25 (there’s no upper age limit)
- Time to give a vulnerable child or young person
- You are in good health
- Be flexible and keep the child at the centre of your life
- You want to learn how to support and care for a child with additional needs to help them achieve their full potential.

There are often many myths surrounding who can foster but to foster you can be:

Single or in a couple
Married or living together
Any sexuality
Have your own children or not have children
A homeowner or living in a Council, private or rented accommodation
Employed or unemployed

Support, skills development and training

We offer all our foster carers training opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge. You will also be supported by your own fostering social worker.

Havering offers its foster carers:

- Regular training
- A fostering social worker who will support you
- Regular support group meetings where you’ll have the chance to meet other foster carers
- A professional support team of teachers, social workers and health advisers
- 24-hour telephone support provided by staff from the Council
- A fee for the work you do
- An allowance to cover all the costs of caring for a child.

Financial support:

All foster carers receive an allowance to look after the children in their care. They also receive a fee to recognise the skills they have and the work they do.

When a child is placed with a Havering foster carer, payment is made directly to their bank account. If a foster carer is in receipt of benefits, they can still receive a fostering allowance which will not affect their benefits claim.
Steps to becoming a Havering foster carer

There are two stages to become a foster carer. In **Stage One** we get to know you, undertake necessary background checks and offer preparation training. In **Stage Two** we formally assess you over a series of visits and continue to prepare you to become a successful foster carer.

**Step 1** (Stage One)
You make an initial enquiry to the Council to find out more about fostering in Havering. You can do this by phoning us, emailing us, applying online or attending a monthly information session. We will provide you with information and establish if fostering might be right for you and your family.

**Step 2** (Stage One)
The Council will arrange a home visit. We talk to you in more detail about fostering and if it’s right for you.

**Step 3** (Stage One)
After this meeting and if we all agree we’d like to continue, we will ask your permission to carry out the checks needed to be able to work with children. This includes police, health and other checks with the council where you live. You will also be invited to attend preparation training called ‘Skills to Foster’.

**Step 4** (Stage One)
After the ‘Skills to Foster’ training you will be invited by the trainers from the group to a feedback meeting. Together we decide if moving to the next stage is right for you. If it is, we ask you to formally apply to become a foster carer, entering stage two of the process.

**Step 5** (Stage Two)
In stage two we undertake a home study with you and members of your household. A social worker will meet you several times and explore in detail your motivation for fostering and how your experiences will help you look after a child/young person. We will also need to meet with some of your friends and family to see how they can support you as a foster carer.

**Step 6** (Stage Two)
When the home study is complete, a report will be written by your social worker and shared with you. The report is then presented to the Havering Fostering and Adoption Panel. The panel is an independent group of people who decide whether or not to recommend that you become a foster carer.

**Step 7** (Stage Two)
If all goes well, you will be recommended by the panel and approved by the Council as a Havering foster carer.

**Step 8** (Stage Two)
As a Havering foster carer you will be allocated a fostering social worker who will be there to offer you continuous support, advice, training and supervision. From this point onwards Havering Council may place a child/young person with you.

Telephone: 01708 434574 or email: fostering@havering.gov.uk

www.havering.gov.uk/fostering
Children come first

- Children in foster care deserve to experience as full a family life as possible as part of a loving foster family with carers who can make everyday decisions as they would for their own child and without the child feeling that they ‘stand out’ as a looked after child.
- Children must be given every support to develop their own identities and aspirations, fulfil their potential, and take advantage of all opportunities to promote their talents and skills. Above all, they should be listened to.

Havering’s foster carers’ Charter

Havering Council will:

- Recognise the importance of the child’s relationship with his or her foster family as one that can make the biggest difference in the child’s life and which can endure into adulthood.
- Listen to and involve foster carers and their foster children in decision-making and planning, and provide foster carers and their foster children with information about each other.
- In making placements be clear about the continuing care or support there will be (including for the child into adulthood), be sensitive to the needs of the foster carer and the child in making and ending placements and have contingency plans should the placement not work.
- Treat foster carers with openness, fairness and respect as a core member of the team around the child and support them in making reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of their foster child.
- Ensure that foster carers have the support services and development opportunities they need in order to provide their foster child with the best possible care. That includes liaising with local foster carer groups and seeking to respond to problems and encourage best practice.
- Make sure foster carers are recompensed on time and are given clear information about any support and allowances.

Foster carers will:

- Provide positive adult role models, treat the foster child as they would their own child, and be an advocate for all aspects of the child’s development, including educational attainment and physical and emotional health and wellbeing. Co-operate fully as part of a team with other key professionals in the child’s life.
- Support their foster child and do all they can to make the placement work. Take part in learning and development, use skills and approaches that make a positive impact and enable the child to reach his or her potential. Support their foster child to help to counter possible bullying and discrimination as a result of being in care.

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