



FOSTERING  
NORTH LONDON

# Becoming a Specialist Teenage Foster Carer





## Specialist Teenage Foster Care

The North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium is made up of the six north London boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington, who work together to find the best possible foster homes for our children. Part of this working together is to develop Specialist Fostering Schemes such as our Teenage Fostering and Parent and Child Schemes.

Each of the six boroughs has a Specialist Fostering Scheme to care for young people aged 11-16, who can present challenges in their behaviour and lifestyle.

These young people will have had very difficult experiences and may have a history of previously failed foster placements or been placed in residential care. Some will be out of school, have little routine in their lives and may feel rejected, unhappy or rebellious. They are not able to return home to their parents or extended families. Placements will normally be for up to 2 years.

These young people will need the stability and support of a specialist foster family where they can develop positive relationships to bring about long-term change. This will involve supporting them to go to school and helping them develop life skills and leisure interests.

The families who foster teenagers with complex needs understand it can be hard work with many challenges but it is also incredibly rewarding to know you have helped a young person to make those right decisions at this crucial time in their life.

# **What kind of person becomes a Specialist Teenage Foster Carer?**

Specialist teenage foster carers must be available at all times to offer placements which may, at times, occur at short notice. You do not need to own your own house but you must be in a secure housing situation and have appropriate space for a young person. You must have enough room in your home to foster a young person, and at least one spare bedroom. One adult must be at home and available at all times.

*“Carers need to be open minded and have the commitment to make a difference to a young person’s life.”*

*Samantha, Specialist Teenage Foster Carer*

# **What might prevent me from becoming a Specialist Teenage Foster Carer?**

You will need to live within approximately one and a half hour's travelling distance from the Consortium boroughs. We welcome carers from both inside and outside the boroughs. These limits enable contact to be maintained between young people, education and their families.

You can't be a specialist teenage foster carer if you have a criminal record for offences against children. Having other criminal convictions doesn't mean that you can't foster but consideration would have to be given whether they might affect your ability to provide proper care.





## Who needs Specialist Teenage foster care?

The young people come from a variety of backgrounds and situations. Many of these young people will have experienced a traumatic childhood and may have a history of a number of broken foster placements.

Many of these young people will be out of school or may have been in trouble with the police.

*"I get a lot of enjoyment and fun out of fostering, it's rewarding and I couldn't live without it."*

*Jennifer, Specialist Teenage Foster Carer*

### This is John's Story

Aged 11, John was part of a street gang increasingly involved in criminal activity. He had a history of non-school attendance and was placed with Peter, a male specialist foster carer.

Peter was made aware from the beginning that this situation was challenging and that John would find house rules and boundaries difficult. Peter worked with the fostering team to address all of John's individual needs. From this work it emerged that John had dyslexia, a factor in him not wanting to engage with school.

John is now attending an alternative education provision and is receiving intensive support. He still finds boundaries a struggle but has not been involved with the police, a huge step for John, and continues to develop a trusting relationship with Peter.

## What are the rewards?

Specialist teenage fostering isn't all about giving; you and your family will also benefit from the experience. You will be making a difference to the lives of young people, often seeing their confidence and self-esteem grow.

As a Specialist Teenage Foster Carer you will receive financial payments and allowances to enable you to work from home:

- Allowances and payments of up to £750 p/w
- Retainers of £450 p/w (up to 4 weeks)

## What kind of help will I get?

You won't be left to cope on your own. You will be supported, at all times, by a Fostering Service social worker. There will be regular visits to assist in ensuring that the placement is going well. In addition you will have:

- 24 hour specialist support
- On-going, specialist certificated training in therapeutically parenting teenagers
- Clinical group supervision and one-to-one supervision
- Personalised support package to meet the needs of the young person

## Could I be a Specialist Teenage Foster Carer?

You need previous experience of being around young people with complex needs and be understanding of the problems they face today. You will patiently build a warm, trusting relationship with a young person to help them find their own special talents and to help them improve their life and to believe in themselves. You'll be an active part of a professional team and receive regular support and training.

Can you meet the following criteria?

- Experience of working with young people
- Understanding of challenging behaviour and problems young people face today
- Ability to listen to young people's wishes & feelings
- The ability to understand and respond to young people's emotional needs
- Effective communication skills to respond effectively and non-judgmentally often in highly emotional situations
- Ability to set clear boundaries
- Good record keeping skills
- The capacity to be an effective advocate for the young person
- Ability to effectively work with other agencies: schools, police, probation, courts and social care and safe guarding
- Ability to engage with other professionals in reviews and conferences
- Availability to travel with the young person to school and appointments when needed.

Then this could be for you!



*“Specialist foster carers must be understanding of challenging behaviour and the problems young people face today.”*

*Simon, Supervising Social Worker*

## How do I become a Specialist Teenage Foster Carer?

There are five stages to becoming a Specialist Teenage Foster Carer with the consortium.

### Initial home visit

This will involve workers from one of our Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Teams coming to your home to discuss specialist teenage fostering. They will inform you of the tasks and expectations involved, as well as obtaining some information from you, which will enable them to assess whether you might be suitable for the role.

Following the meeting you will have time to think about whether you are still interested in becoming a specialist teenage foster carer and the workers will also discuss your case in their teams and with their managers. If all agree to proceed, we will ask you to complete an application form.

Once completed we:

- Invite you to the next preparation training group
- Allocate you to a social worker for a full assessment
- Start to request checks and references

# Preparation training

The group is attended by all prospective foster carers and aims to increase understanding and knowledge about the legal framework, the physical and emotional needs of looked after children and young people and working with Children's Services and families. For specialist teenage foster carers there will be additional training, which will focus on parenting teenagers with special needs.

# Full assessment

A social worker will visit you over a period of three to four months to complete an assessment of your ability to be a specialist teenage foster carer and to prepare you for the role. As well as talking to you, they will also speak (with your permission) to other people who know you in order to obtain as full a picture as possible of you and your family.

The social worker will write a report that is presented to the fostering panel, which will recommend whether or not you are approved as a specialist teenage foster carer. You will have the opportunity to read the report and say whether you agree with it.

# Checks and references

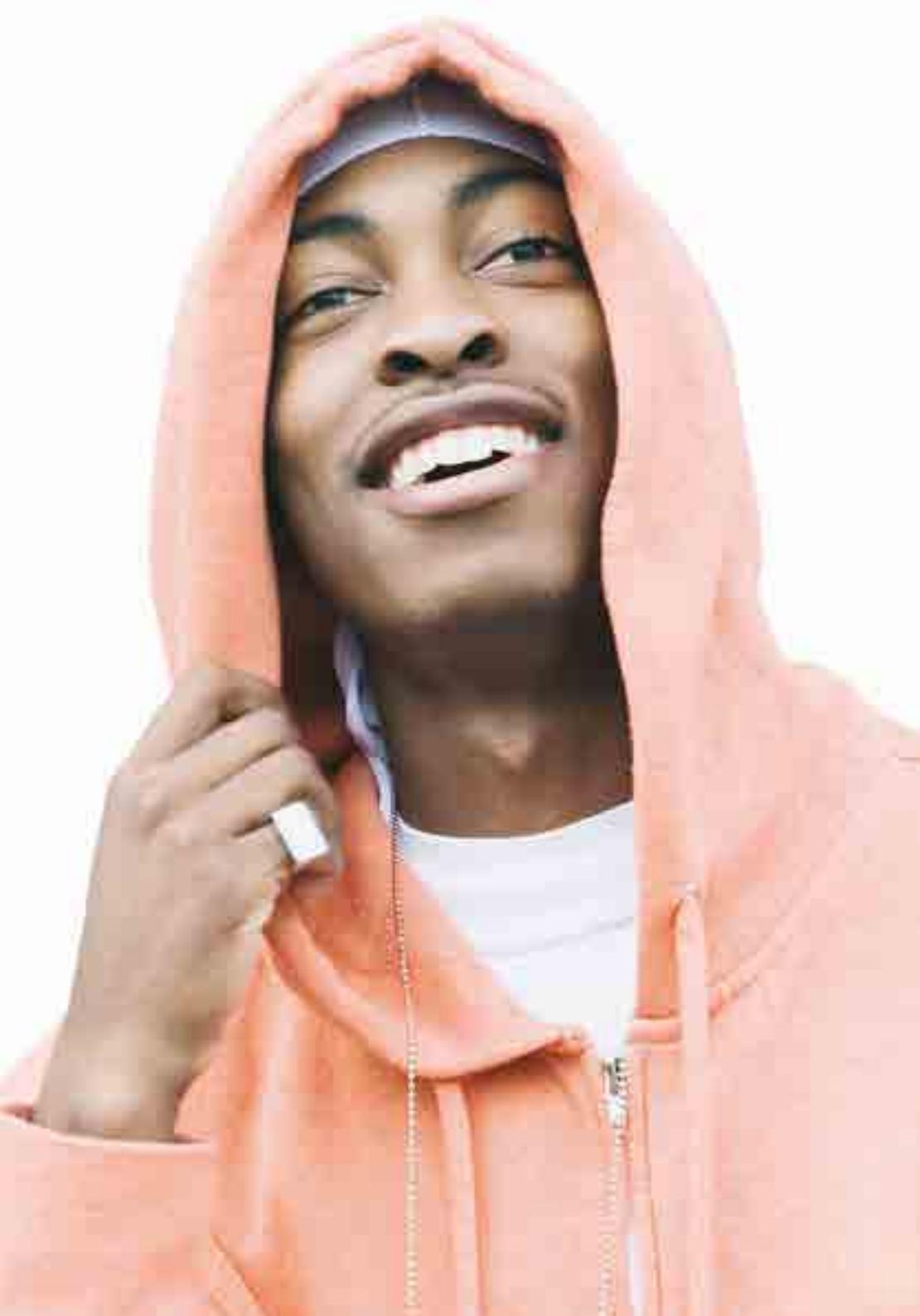
We need to be absolutely sure that we only place vulnerable children in the care of adults with whom they will be safe. Therefore we carry out a number of checks and references, many of which are a legal requirement.

These include a medical report from your GP, a criminal records bureau disclosure, at least two personal references, checks with social services, housing and schools. We also carry out a health and safety check of your home.

# The fostering panel

Once the report, training and checks are completed, you will be invited to attend the fostering panel. The panel is composed of people from the local authority, as well as independent members, all of whom have expertise in the needs of looked after children.

On the basis of the information that they have been given, they will recommend whether or not you are approved as a specialist teenage foster carer. This may seem like a long process, but it is important to remember that our first priority is to ensure the safety of children and young people in care.



## What happens after approval?

You will be allocated a supervising social worker from one of our fostering teams who will provide you with ongoing support. You will sign an agreement which sets out the expectations of the specialist teenage foster carer and the department. We also ensure that you receive written information about policies and procedures and any equipment that you need, such as beds and bedding.

When a placement is needed, you will receive a phone call from the fostering team. Your worker, or someone from their team, will be on hand to answer questions and give advice.

## What should I do now?

If you would like to apply to become a Specialist Teenage Foster Carer or just want to find out more, contact the North London Fostering Consortium by telephone on

**020 8359 6274** or email at  
[info@fosteringnorthlondon.co.uk](mailto:info@fosteringnorthlondon.co.uk)

The North London Fostering Consortium is made up of six London boroughs working together to improve outcomes for children and young people.

