

Foster for Merton



**Open your heart and home
to change a child's life**

merton.gov.uk/fostering





Open your heart and home to change a child's life

Merton Council provides services to all people living in the London Borough of Merton and we aspire to be the best council in London. We are very proud of our Fostering Team, but don't just take our word for it. We were rated 'Good' with 'outstanding features' in leadership, management, adoption and safeguarding by Ofsted in 2017.

We are delighted that you would like to find out about fostering – it is one of the most extraordinary and rewarding things you can do. Merton Fostering Recruitment Team is a small, friendly team committed to providing the best possible service to people and families wishing to become Foster Carers for Merton.

We believe that a local, caring family is the very best environment for a child or young person to be in, when it is not possible for them to live with their birth parents. That is why we are committed to and offer continued support and training for our Foster Carers, as well as a start-up grant, a generous allowance and additional allowances for birthdays and holidays.

We're **Good** with
Outstanding features



Who are Foster Carers?

Foster Carers are people from all walks of life who are able to offer a home on a temporary, or in some cases, permanent basis for a child who, for whatever reason, cannot live with their birth family.

Foster Carers provide a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment for a child who is being looked after by the local authority. Regardless of what a child may have experienced, having to live away from their family will often be traumatic.

Do you have room in your home and your heart to foster a child?

Foster Carers are part of a team of people that includes health visitors, social workers, psychologists and other health professionals who are all working and supporting children with a view to trying to enable them to return to their family or move to an adoptive or permanent foster home.

“ One of the biggest rewards is being able to provide children with opportunities they may not have had in the past and help them look to the future.”

Merton Foster Carer



The Wilson Family, Morden



The Hargreaves Family, Wimbledon



The Chancer Family, Pollards Hill

Anyone can apply to Foster, if:

You are a British Citizen or have leave to remain in the UK and you have a spare room available for a foster child.

- ✓ **Age is not necessarily a barrier to fostering**
- ✓ **We are inclusive of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability**
- ✓ **You can be unemployed or on benefits**
- ✓ **You can rent or own your own home**



What is Fostering?

Fostering improves children's and young people's lives and can last from one night to a number of years. A Foster Carer really can make the difference to a child or young person's life.

When a child or young person cannot live at home or with extended family or friends, we want to find suitable foster care homes for them. Foster Carers need to be able to provide a safe, secure, loving, nurturing and stable environment which allows a foster child to flourish. Carers need to be patient, empathetic, understanding, non-judgemental and to have a sense of humour.

If you think this is you and you have room in your home and heart get in touch today.

“ I gave him a present in the form of a front door key on a personalised key ring. I hope it gave him a sense of belonging to a family who are thrilled to have him there.”

Merton Foster Carer



Frequently asked questions

Why do children and young people need foster placements?

There are many reasons why children and young people come into care. These might include family breakdown, mental illness, any form of abuse, substance misuse or neglect, prolonged ill health, death of birth parents, imprisonment or seeking asylum.

What do I need to do this?

Your life experience of being a child, a parent, a partner, a carer, is all relevant when fostering. Fostering is life changing; it has the power to change your life and the foster child's.

Can I still work?

Yes of course, but you will need to be flexible enough to be available at the times when a child needs you. You may want to foster teenagers if you work outside the home. A social worker will talk this through with you at an initial visit to your home and help you decide.

How can we help you to become Foster Carers?

Social workers will support you each step of the way and we will help you to develop a support network with experienced Foster Carers and join with other support services.

You never foster alone and are part of a team of professionals who work together to improve children's lives. We will provide you with specialist advice from psychologists, health professionals and teachers.

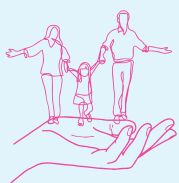
There are different types of Foster Carer:

Some Foster Carers look after the same children throughout their childhood. While some will foster children for short periods of time throughout their fostering career, others will provide support and assistance on a respite basis. Fostering is as unique as you are!



Ongoing benefits of fostering for Merton include:

✓ Your own supervising social worker (SSW) from the Fostering Team:



You will be allocated your own supervising social worker (SSW). Their job is to supervise and support Foster Carers in looking after foster children and working with their families and other professionals involved in children's lives.

✓ A generous fostering allowance for each child placed with you:



This is based on the age and needs of the child, and covers all costs including clothes, food, travel, pocket money, special equipment and wear and tear to your home plus a contribution toward your outgoings and bills.

✓ Out of Hours support:



We offer 24 hour support to Foster Carers who have access to a duty social worker from the fostering service if they have any concerns after the office closes on an evening or at a weekend.

✓ A comprehensive ongoing training programme:



We offer comprehensive training for all carers before they are approved. After approval, courses on all aspects of fostering run throughout the year.

✓ Support groups:



Merton's Foster Carer Association, which meets regularly and offers mutual support, friendship and skill sharing.

✓ Buddy scheme:



Merton runs a buddying scheme for all newly approved Foster Carers.

✓ Fostering Network subscription:



Merton pays each carer's individual membership for an annual subscription to the Fostering Network.

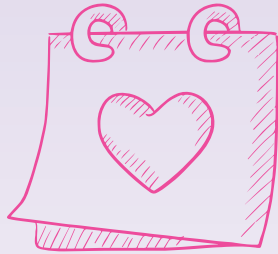
✓ Outings and Events:



Various events are organised for Foster Carers throughout the year such as the Foster Carer Reception at a five star hotel and the Foster Carers Christmas Party.

How long does it take to become a Foster Carer?

It generally takes between 3 – 6 months to become a Foster Carer. Merton's fostering teams are here to support you every step of your fostering journey, from your initial enquiry to approval and throughout your fostering career.



Step 1 You contact us

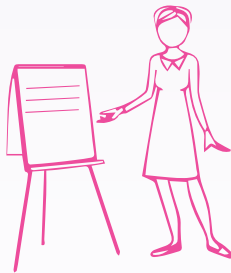
Step 2 We come to visit you at your home

Step 3

You attend Preparation Training

We will invite you to a Skills to Foster Preparation Training Course:

This is run by Merton and is split over three weekdays and a Saturday morning. It provides an introduction to the work that Foster Carers undertake with children and young people, and also the important role that they have in relation to the parents of these children and other professionals, such as social workers, teachers and medical staff. The course will help you to decide whether fostering is right for you and your family, and enable the trainers to decide whether you have the potential to become a successful Foster Carer.



Step 4

You complete an application form

We will ask you to complete an application form, giving the names of four (if applying as a single applicant) or six people, (if applying as a couple), who are willing to be interviewed as your referees. With your consent, we ask your GP to give you a medical to ensure you are fit and healthy. We also make checks with the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS), the local authority in which you live, NSPCC, education and relevant previous employers.



Step 5

Stage 1 of a Fostering assessment

You will be allocated your own assessing social worker to undertake your fostering assessment. Checks and references will be undertaken.

Stage 2 of a Fostering assessment

This is an in-depth look at your history, previous and current relationships, lifestyle and parenting capacity. We complete a report with you.

Step 6

Presentation of the completed report to our fostering and adoption panel

Your report will be read and a few questions will be asked by the panel who will go on to make a recommendation of approval. Final approval will be given by our Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

Once approved you will meet the fostering support team and your own SSW who will ensure you are fully prepared to take on your first foster placement.



A Foster Carer's story:

Hassan and Roberta have been Foster Carers for five years, during which they have looked after 15 children aged 12 to 18.



“We started fostering as our children had moved out and we wanted to help other children. We foster teenagers, which has its challenges, but overall we really enjoy it!”

“To be a good Foster Carer, you need to be caring, tolerant, patient and non-judgemental. And be a very good listener!”

“We get lots of support and training from Merton. We can pick up the phone any time and speak to someone. That makes our job easy. There's a great support group, who meet regularly, which really helps.”

Hassan and Roberta



Find out more today and call us for a friendly chat on:

020 8545 4070 or 0800 073 0874

Email fostering@merton.gov.uk

Visit www.merton.gov.uk/fostering

 Follow us on Facebook:
Merton Fostering and Adoption Network


Merton Fostering

“We give them a shot at a good future.”

Merton Foster Carer

