

# Reach Out

## Camden foster carers Newsletter

Issue 12



Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter for Camden foster carers. We hope that you continue to find our newsletter interesting and useful. If you have any ideas for future features or a story to share about your life as a foster carer, please do write in. The content can always adapt to what you need to know and want to read about. To send us your comments or suggestions about the newsletter, please email [elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk](mailto:elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk) or phone 020 7974 1152.

We look forward to hearing from you.

### Inside this issue:

New CAFC website | BackChat | Awards 2013

# BACKCHAT

## website launch

BackChat is a participation website by young people for young people. Young people in care and care leavers have been involved in developing the website including its content, functions and the design.

The BackChat website is for children, young people, carers and parents who receive services from Camden Social Care.

The aim of the website is to provide a digital platform for service users to promote participation in user surveys and obtain views about the service, provide information and to reach Looked After Children placed outside of Camden.

Please visit: [www.backchatonline.org.uk](http://www.backchatonline.org.uk)



### Christmas Party 2012

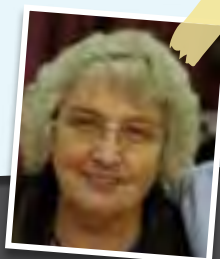
Another positive day for our young ones in care. It is so nice when you sit back and watch the interaction among the children. Some meeting for the first time, some playing catch up with old friends, carers meeting socially and a very good turn out from the fostering department.

It's lovely to see the little ones relaxed and enjoying themselves. We know it's not always easy to plan your day for this annual event, but it's so important for the children to meet up with other young ones who are in care and realise that life goes on and how many people have their best interest at heart, not just the carers looking after them, but the whole department making sure their needs are being met.

We try to give sufficient notice, so everyone can organise their day and for new carers to meet other carers and fostering staff, not in a formal setting like a meeting or a course, so for those that were able to come 'thank you' and we hope to see you next year. Please bear in mind these events, like all other outings, do not happen overnight and require a lot of organisation and planning.

We do need the support of other carers with this annual event. Don't be shy, please come forward and be supportive.

Many thanks  
Moirá Doneo MBE  
Specialist foster carer



## CAFC

Camden's Association of Foster Carers (CAFC) provides carers with support and advice, while sharing information on the practicalities of caring for Camden children. For information and advice or to speak to a CAFC member, please call **020 7974 3399**. If anyone is interested in joining the committee, please call John Doneo, Chair of CAFC, on **07957 262 987** or email [jdoneo@ntlworld.com](mailto:jdoneo@ntlworld.com)

A date has already been set for this year's children's Christmas party. It will be held on Saturday 7 December at the Irish Centre, from 1pm till 5pm. For information, please do not hesitate to contact **John Doneo**.



**Camden  
Association  
for Foster Care**

# U-turn on bedroom tax for foster carers



As you are probably aware, the Government has reconsidered proposals which would have penalised foster carers if they claim housing benefit in privately rented and social housing property from April.

The change of heart follows campaigning efforts by the Fostering Network and its members, which included a joint letter to Iain Duncan Smith MP and George Osborne MP signed by 10 other charities.

From April, people living in social housing with a spare bedroom will lose a portion of their housing benefit. This would have had a devastating impact on foster carers, as fostered children's bedrooms are considered to be spare rooms under the legislation.

Under the new proposals, foster carers will be allowed an additional room, whether or not a child has been placed with them or they are between placements, so long as they have fostered a child or become an approved foster carer in the last 12 months.

Robert Tapsfield, chief executive of the Fostering Network, said: "This is fantastic news. This change of policy means that foster carers can sleep easy knowing that they will not be punished for providing homes for some of the UK's most vulnerable children. We are particularly pleased that it will also impact on those in privately rented accommodation as they have already been hit with penalties for 'under occupancy' for 18 months."

## Savings

Please be advised that from 1 April, carers are being asked to save £10 a week for foster children, as opposed to £5 a week. This has been discussed and agreed with CAFC.

Foster carers are also expected to open bank accounts for children, so if you are unable to do so in the child's name due to lack of ID documentation, you can open a separate account for the child in your own name. If you have any questions about savings, please speak with your supervising social worker.



## Passports for LAC

A number of our Looked After Children may be missing out on holidays and school trips because they do not have a passport.

We appreciate this can be very frustrating both for you and the children and young people in your care, so please get in contact with your supervising social worker to let them know if the Looked After Children in your care, who are eligible, have a passport or not. If they don't, we will make arrangements to apply for one immediately.

**Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.**



## Fostering Games

Many children and young people are spending more and more 'alone' time on computers and game consoles. Playing board games on the other hand can involve a big group of people and the whole family. Camden's Fostering Team and the LAC Academy would like to raise awareness of the benefits of playing board games and are inviting foster carers to take part in our Fostering Games project.

Some of the benefits of playing board games and taking part in Fostering Games include the following:

- group/family interaction gives a sense of belonging
- skills of cooperating, turn-taking and following rules are valuable lessons taught in simple games



- stimulation – many games require good memory and planning skills
- basic literacy and numeracy skills can be acquired in a relaxed way
- everyone can enjoy the fun of playing together

**To find out more about Camden's Fostering Games, please speak to your supervising social worker.**



# What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a service provided by carers for carers. A mentor provides support to other carers in a period of crisis.

We are seeking carers who can make themselves available for the role of mentoring. There has always been a history of carers helping one another and sometimes that help is better coming from someone who isn't within your circle of friends. Perhaps someone who is impartial, able to gather all the facts from both parties (if needed) and to liaise with other mentors to determine how best to approach a situation. This is the role of a mentor.

Please don't hesitate to come forward. I hear carers say "We do not want to rock the boat" or "Will there be a comeback on us?".

I am here to tell you the answer is NO. If you are prepared to become a mentor, you must have a strong belief in yourself. A lot of our work is basic common sense, training will be provided where necessary and you will not be thrown in the deep end at first

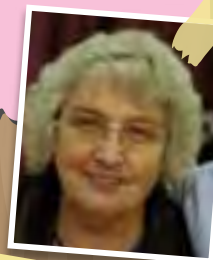
time of trying. We follow a brief set of guidelines and existing mentors are always willing to help.

If you already are a member of CAFC I'm sure you will be well aware of the mentoring scheme and the service they provide, however, it's important to note that you don't have to be a committee member to come forward.

Some of our mentors are retiring or moving on. Our mentoring service has been going for over 30 years. We would like to think that when we step back there will be carers willing to continue mentoring. It's a service that we've all used at some point in our fostering careers and to lose such a service which has provided such a benefit to many carers would be a great loss. After years of struggling for recognition we now find ourselves built in to the foster carer's charter.

So please think about it, don't hesitate to contact me, a mentor or any committee member.

Moira Doneo M.B.E



# KEEP training

I was not really sure how this course was going to work, but I was keen to meet with the other carers to see how they managed to pick up a few things. Even to see what foster carers that have been around a long time, like myself, could learn.

The difference between babies and toddlers to young ones moving to family and familiar faces and places is totally different from moving children to the unknown. By that I mean, getting the timing right, getting the preparation right to move on, getting to know the family the young ones are moving onto and reassuring them that this is a new stage in their life which we must recognise the importance of. To achieve this, we the carers must ensure that we have as much information as possible in our preparation to motivate everyone around us, especially the young ones who need reassuring that this is a 'forever' family. When there are older siblings involved, their feelings and emotions

have to be considered, as we are asking them to give their sibling's permission to move on with a good heart.

We found that the KEEP course covered all of this and more, and the support the carers got from one another was great. We felt this course would benefit new carers as it gave guidelines as to how the young ones can be motivated to take responsibility for their own actions with the guidance of the carers.

If you are given the opportunity to go on this course, it's well worth attending.

Moira Doneo M.B.E  
Specialist Foster Carer



# Spotlight on Natalie

## Camden foster carer

Natalie was approved as a Camden foster carer in 2012. Here she talks about the reasons why she went into fostering, and her experiences as a foster carer so far.

### Why did you get into fostering?

I have been surrounded by fostering most of my life.

It started with my aunt who was a foster carer for Islington for 27 years! And I remember when I was young, I used to visit my auntie's house and all the different children she looked after. I loved playing with them and remember them fondly.

Then during my teenage years my mum also fostered, so I have also been the child of a foster carer.

I got a real insight into what it involved and also it helped me have a better understanding of foster children's feelings of being away from their family and in unfamiliar settings.

I come from a very long line of nurses in my family, so caring for others has always been very important to me.

I have always been interested in fields of work that involve care of others. I myself was a student nurse, but my passion was midwifery, which I was hoping to do after my nursing was completed.

But my career changed direction when I decided that I wanted to work at grassroots level with women and children and decided to become a Doula with Doula UK. A doula provides emotional and practical support during childbirth and postnatal period.

Whilst doing my doula work I began to realise that I was only

with them for a contracted period of time and began to want to make a difference to a child's life on a longer term basis.

It was my mum who mentioned to me one day "why don't you foster" and I had completely forgotten that I had all that experience growing up and the skills I had acquired during nursing and doulaing were easily transferable to fostering!

So I approached Camden and was approved in 2012.

### How did you find the assessment process?

I found the assessment process very interesting and thought provoking and enjoyed being assessed.

It really made me think about things on a deeper level and about the commitment I was about to make.

I particularly enjoyed the Skills to Foster group and have kept in touch with a lot of people that attended who are now also foster carers themselves.

### How would you describe your experience of being a foster carer so far?

I am really enjoying it.

The change that you can make in a child's life is amazing and I'm loving it.

I was very proud when I fostered my first placement and felt all warm inside knowing that I had been



a little part of that child's life and helped them progress.

It has also had a positive impact on my family and friends, who are now considering fostering themselves.

### What have been the highlights and challenges?

The highlights for me have been looking after the children and watching them grow.

I feel it's challenging when a child first arrives, as it can be nerve racking for you, but even more so for the children themselves.

You have to learn about the child from scratch and you may not have a lot of info at first and you need to be able to be adaptable and think quick on your feet to try and make the child feel as comfortable as possible. It's also challenging but overall satisfying when you manage to build a bond with the child.

### Would you encourage others to explore fostering?

Yes, definitely. It is such a positive and life enhancing experience.

I would recommend it to anyone with the love in their heart and space in their home.

# New CAFC website

Last year, CAFC developed a new website [www.cafc.eu](http://www.cafc.eu) to address the following issues:

- Communication: using modern media
- Increased involvement of foster carers in CAFC
- To have a “stronger voice”
- Sharing of information to everyone
- Sharing of good practice and tips
- Support for each other
- Communicate news and events

The more foster carers use this website, the more useful it will become. Participation and active involvement will ensure the better use of resources to enhance the excellent standard of foster care in Camden.

This site is updated regularly to provide our members with up-to-date news and events, resources, newsletters, policies, calendar of events and more. Contributions or updates to listings can be made via our contact page form or by emailing our Webmaster. Signing up is easy, and navigation around the site is clear and uncomplicated. There is a range of news, information and resources, both internal and external to Camden.

**We hope you will all sign up and in time contribute to the website in some way.**



## Fostering Inspection

Camden's fostering service was inspected by Ofsted earlier this year, over a period of four days, between 22-25 January 2013.

The outcome of the inspection was positive and stated that "the overall effectiveness of the service was good with two areas that were outstanding". The outstanding areas were the overall outcomes for children and young people and the quality of the service.

The inspection highlighted a small number of areas that needed improvement and the one that has the most relevance to the team's practice was that the service needs to ensure that all fostering households have at least one unannounced home visit a year.

In summary, the inspection team found the overall effectiveness of the fostering team's impact on the outcomes for children and young people in Camden to be good.

The fostering service is keenly aware that the good inspection outcome is also due to all the hard work that foster carers undertake and the commitment and care they give to the children and young people of Camden. Those of you who were involved in the inspection had direct discussions with the inspectors about your experiences. The inspectors' feedback to the service was that your commitment to the children and young people was clear to see in the meeting.

The fostering service would like to take this opportunity to say **thank you for all your hard work** which resulted in a good outcome for the service.

**If you would like to see a copy of the inspection report, please contact your supervising social worker or you can access it on the OFSTED website.**

**You can also access the report on the CAFC website.**



## Spread the word

Please join us in our efforts to recruit more foster carers. For every person/couple you refer to us that is successfully approved as a Camden foster carer, you will receive a reward of £300. We hold open information evenings throughout the year for prospective carers to come and meet our team.

**To find out more about our open evenings, the venue details and the referral rewards scheme, please speak to your fostering supervising social worker or call 020 7974 6783.**



# Training

It's very important that foster carers sign up for the dedicated training courses available in Camden. Carers need to sign up for at least 3 training sessions a year. When unable to attend training, please inform the duty social worker by calling **020 7974 6783**. There is now a charge for non-attendance without prior notification, so please let us know as soon as possible if you're not able to attend a pre-booked course.

We have a varied range of training courses coming up (all held at Vадnie Bish House) and we are continually adding to these, so please keep an eye out for the updated training schedules that we email to carers. Several of these are core trainings and if you haven't done them for 3 years, please do put yourself forward.



## Foster carer awards 2013

Our team will be holding this year's annual awards ceremony for Camden foster carers on Friday 17 May at the Holiday Inn in Camden Lock. Camden foster carers have already received an invitation letter asking them to rsvp by Friday 26 April. The event includes a drinks reception and a three course dinner as well as the special awards presentation. The awards ceremony is a unique opportunity for Camden to celebrate our foster carers' hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to caring for Camden children.

Last year's event was attended by legendary actor and foster carer Melvyn Hayes, who

congratulated carers for their services to Camden's looked after children and personally handed out the awards and certificates.

Melvyn Hayes said:

“As a foster carer myself, I am delighted to be paying Camden foster carers the respect and recognition they deserve. Offering a stable home environment to a child that may not have one is an act of pure selflessness and compassion. I would like to personally thank every single one of them. I just hope that we continue to find homes and carers for all our vulnerable children and young people and to help them get the most out of their lives.”

Previous events have been attended by actor Sir Derek Jacobi, Madness lead singer Suggs, actress Georgina Hale and singer Sinitta.



Camden foster carer Chris receives his 5 year long service award from actor Melvyn Hayes

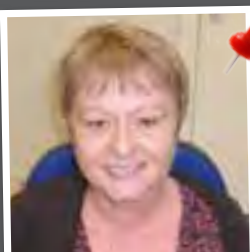


Sinitta attended our event in 2011

# Meet our Fostering Team

## Putting a face to the name

Although you may have already met in person with one or more of our workers, we thought we'd introduce you to the whole team.



**Nuala Harrington**  
Team Manager



**Pal Jandu**  
Panel advisor



**Renee Powell**  
Senior Practitioner



**Daniella Yahuda**  
Senior Practitioner



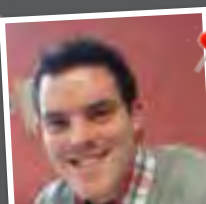
**Yasmin Iyyaz**  
Senior Practitioner



**Fiona Ford**  
Supervising social worker



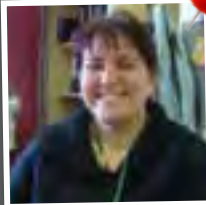
**Helen Downhill**  
Supervising social worker



**Blair Mortimer**  
Supervising social worker



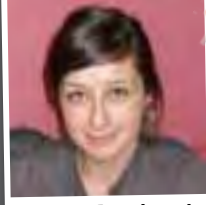
**Debra Douse**  
Supervising social worker



**Tina Hodgkinson**  
Supervising social worker



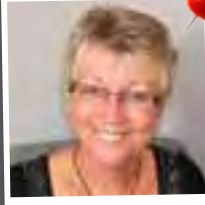
**Jonny Persoff**  
Supervising social worker



**Justyna Mroczkowska**  
Supervising social worker



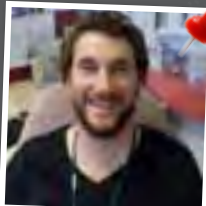
**Nadine Beresford**  
Supervising social worker



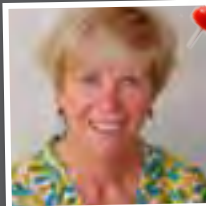
**Barbara Lucas**  
Supervising social worker



**Ewa Remon**  
Supervising social worker



**James Ball**  
Supervising social worker



**Oonagh Hodges**  
Supervising social worker



**Raj Munisami**  
Private fostering social worker



**Sonia Simpson**  
Admin Assistant



**Elias Koronis**  
Marketing Officer

This newsletter was edited by Elias Koronis, Marketing Officer in the Adoption and Fostering teams in Camden. If you have any comments, please email [elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk](mailto:elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk) or call 020 7974 1152.

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Fax: 020 7974 6799

[camden.gov.uk/fostering](http://camden.gov.uk/fostering)

If you have a complaint about the service you get from the Council, please phone us on 020 7974 6673 and ask for a copy of the guide to making a complaint.

If you would like this newsletter in another language, please phone Elias on 020 7974 1152.

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