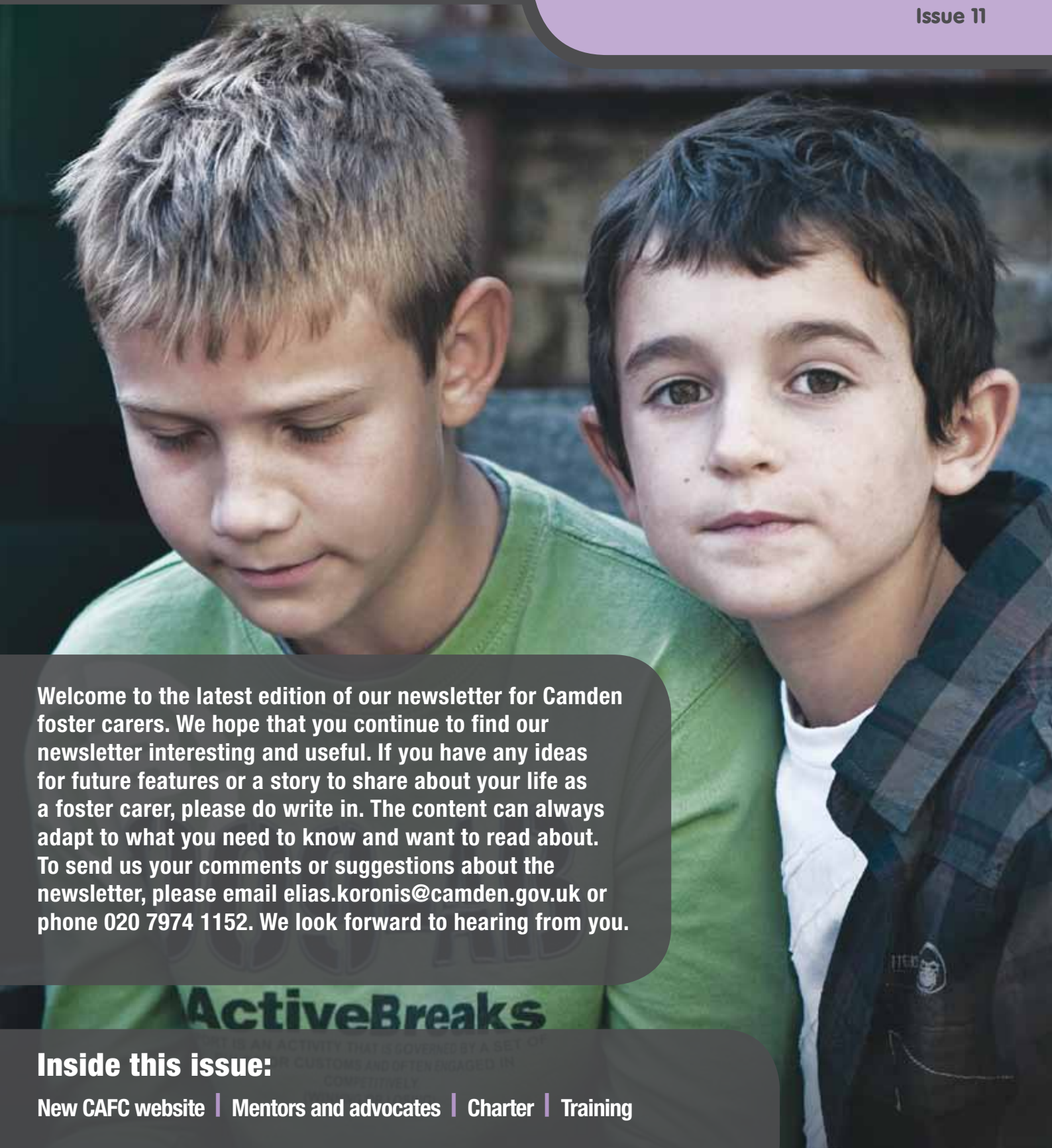


Reach Out

Camden foster carers Newsletter

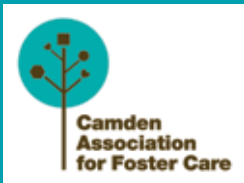
Issue 11



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 or phone 020 7974 1152. We look forward to hearing from you.

Inside this issue:

New CAFC website | Mentors and advocates | Charter | Training



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

A date has already been set for this year's children's Christmas party. It will be held on Saturday 15 December at the Irish Centre, from 1pm till 5pm. For information, please do not hesitate to contact John Doneo.

New CAFC website

Camden Foster Care Association now has its own website.

www.cafc.eu

The new site was launched at the CAFC annual general meeting and was developed to help CAFC be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all foster carers in Camden.

As well as improved communication and sharing of information, the new website offers you a platform to raise concerns, including issues around allegations, finance or placements.

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.

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. If you need help accessing the website, please let us know. We'll be happy to help.

CAFC Mentors & Advocates

Thirty years ago a Camden foster carer had an allegation made against him. Tragically he was unable to cope and committed suicide. We, who were around at the time, were very shocked, as we had not heard anything until we were informed about his death, while attending a group support meeting.

At the time eight carers came together and agreed we should ensure that nothing like this should ever happen again; that there should always be advice and support for foster carers. Our group got in contact with the Samaritans, and as a result, a fostering group from the North of England, who were already offering this service to their carers, came to talk to us.

We then all went on a mentoring course. At the end of the course we felt confident enough to set our own group in connection with CAFC. There are now only two of us from the original eight. Some have retired, some have passed away, but the

idea of 'being there' for each other is still our driving force.

The climate we live and work in today can be very stressful; young children and teenagers coming into care today have many complex needs. We all need support at one time or another. Carers have always been good at talking to one another and with family members; great friendships have sprung up over the years between carers. Sometimes, someone not directly involved in a situation may be able to say "It's ok. Let's look at the big picture and different scenarios. We may not be able to solve the problem, but we can offer choices about different ways to deal with a situation." However, sometimes something more is needed and this is when an advocate may become involved.

We are aware some carers are nervous about speaking out for fear of upsetting the department; or maybe they feel unable to put their case clearly, because they are emotional about an allegation being made against them. Whatever the reason we want to offer carers someone to listen and hopefully work out a way forward. We want to ensure an environment of trust and support, after all ... happy carers = happier children.

Mediation and Advocacy (CAFC) is a service that is advertised and encouraged through the department. The service will always place the welfare of looked after children as its primary concern and work towards resolving any issues between carers and the department at ground level. Both staff and carers can be rest assured that confidentiality is observed and we will only approach the department at the carer's request or agreement.

Any member of CAFC can be approached with an issue you wish to talk about and they may delegate to a member who has experience in that particular field. Partnership working has always proved to be an effective model in Camden and the mentoring and advocacy service is there to bridge the gap if needed.

John Doneo MBE, specialist foster carer





Camden Association of Foster Care 40th Anniversary (1972 – 2012)

In 1972 a few Camden foster carers met at a group meeting at the Area 4 office in Gospel Oak. CAFC grew from this initial meeting. Our first chairman and instigator was Chris Gardiner and his wife Susie, who had started fostering a sibling group of five children that year and wanted/needed to meet other carers. These were the first committee members: Ms Val Mann, Mr & Mrs John Doneo, Mr & Mrs Tom Page, Mr & Mrs Tony Brown, Mr & Mrs Pat Crinnion, Mr & Mrs Pat Johns, Ms Joan Jagger, SSW Sue Anderson, SSW Barbara Eaton, Ms Ena Fry and Sue Anderson's husband who was our first treasurer. The Director at that time was Mr Kenneth Urwin and his AD was Ms Kate Atherton, who helped CAFC to get a small grant from Camden Council.

CAFC wrote and had printed a handbook called the "A-Z of

Fostering for Camden", which was copied by other agencies all over the UK. CAFC also wrote to all local authorities in the country to see if there were other foster carer groups – one authority famously replied that they did not have a foster carer group as all their children were cared for in children's homes.

Following CAFC's initiative 17 groups began to meet, which led to the formation of the National Foster Care Association (now Fostering Network) in 1974. NFCA's inaugural meeting was at Acland Burghley School in NW5, with more than 300 delegates from all over the UK, who were addressed by Government Minister David Owen. Camden foster carers produced the salad lunch for everybody. NFCA's first office was in Queen's Crescent, and from there the first international meeting was organised at Oxford University in 1979. This led to the formation of the worldwide International Foster

Care Organisation (www.ifco.info) in 1981 in the Netherlands.

Our AGMs used to be held at Willing House (now a Travelodge) in Grays Inn Road, with foster carers bringing in food for the buffet afterwards. The aim of the association was to bring carers and the fostering department together for the best interests of the looked-after children. Every year we used to hold an international event and family days with a lot of activities for the children. The fostering department used to host a big Christmas party for carers, their children and looked-after children at the Coram Centre.

On behalf of the present CAFC, I would like to thank Chris Gardiner for the hard work he put in to start CAFC. Chris travelled from his home in the Czech Republic to meet old and new friends at the 40th CAFC Anniversary AGM that was held on Thursday 14th June 2012.

The Foster Carers Charter

Last year the London Borough of Camden in consultation with Camden's foster carers worked on producing a foster carer charter that could support foster carers, the local authority and other services to have a shared understanding about fostering and the role it plays in meeting the needs of our looked-after children.

This work was completed earlier this year and on the 1st of May 2012, our Fostering Service held a special event to launch the Foster Carers Charter for Camden carers. This Charter aims to ensure that all looked-after children in Camden get the best care possible, so they can make the most of their

opportunities, now and in the future. Camden recognises and values the important role that Camden foster carers play in providing this excellent care to our children. The Charter provides a clear and easily understandable set of principles to guide the relationship between foster carers and the local authority in providing for the needs of some of the most vulnerable children of Camden.

A copy of the Foster Carers Charter for Camden was given out to carers who attended the fostering awards ceremony on the 18th of May and further copies were posted out to all remaining foster carers. The charter is also available on the foster carers' CAFC website.



*Cllr Jill Fraser
Cllr Thomas Gardiner
John Doneo, CAFC Chair
Cllr Claire-Louise Leyland
Former Cabinet Member for
Children Larraïne Revah*

Spotlight on Steve

Camden foster carer

Steve was approved as a Camden foster carer in February 2012. Here he talks about the assessment process and his experiences as a foster carer so far.

I initially trained as a general nurse in Aberdeen, Scotland and if you were to ask any of my friends at the time the very thought of me having or looking after children was laughable. However, since moving to London over 21 years ago, I went on to train as a sick children's nurse. Throughout the past 14 years within this field there has been very little that I have not seen.

I was flicking through a nursing journal at home one day when I saw a foster carer recruitment advert. I sat on this for a few days, intermittently looking at this advert, until I found myself saying "I could do that". I contacted that agency and was sent an information pack, but no-one followed this up with me. Then having discussed this with a good friend of mine, she advised me to contact Camden to inform them of my intention and perhaps they may want me to join their team.

I contacted the duty social worker and spoke with a lovely Scottish lady who wrote all my questions down; and when the duty social worker returned my call the first thing she did was answer them all. She then asked if I needed anything else answering. I was very impressed by this – "what a professional" I thought! I was then invited to an open evening where the speakers were lovely and answered all my queries. I was then contacted about one week later to ask how I found the open evening and if I would like to proceed with my application. I jumped at this offer – YES

PLEASE! I was then invited to a 3 day preparation group.

The preparation group was an eye opener – even for me with years of childcare experience. Some of the course for me was updating my child protection/safeguarding knowledge, but the other part of the course was fantastic. I am not a great believer in role play, but this put a new spin on it even for me. It made me think deeper about how I would deal with a similar situation and what the thoughts of others (including perpetrators) were. Oonagh and Fiona were fantastic at facilitating this workshop.

Two weeks later, I received a phone call from Oonagh asking if I would like to continue to the next stage (sounds a bit like X-factor!) – again, I became very excited and expressed my wish to continue.

I was then allocated Jonny as my assessing social worker, who prodded and probed my thoughts, feelings and those of my nominated family and friends. There were a few times throughout the assessment process where I was actually stuck for words (a very rare thing for me!) in my description of my feelings. Personally, I think the process went quickly; friends thought it could be quicker and with fewer questions but Jonny was very good at getting the truth from me and this again was reflected from my friends, who said he would make a great interrogator!

The highlights of the process were the people with whom I came into contact with – from other candidates to social workers to the approval panel. The foster carers' network is something special; the support and friendliness of other carers out there has inspired me

immensely. The approval panel was scary, but what made this less stressful was the Panel Chair coming to greet me on my arrival – this I found very humane. I was approved in February 2012 and currently have a 10 year old boy, who comes to me every 4 weeks. Each time I pick him up at school his little face lights up, which immediately makes me smile. He talks incessantly about anything and everything, including his "made up" stories. He enjoys meeting other children and loves SpongeBob SquarePants.

“ Each time I pick him up at school his little face lights up, which immediately makes me smile ”

To date, I have experienced no difficulties. There are times when you have to think outside

the box and use this to interact with the child/young person. This is about a partnership – between me, the child/young person and Social Services.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the assessment process and learned some things about myself along the way.

I would encourage anyone to look into becoming a foster carer, whether it's full-time fostering or respite at the weekend, which allows me to hold down my full-time job, Monday to Friday. Currently I am unable to foster full-time due to other commitments, but this is something which I am seriously considering for the future.



Janet's lemon cake

Hi everyone, I have this fail-safe recipe for a simple and delicious lemon cake. It usually takes about 1 hour and 30 minutes and I break it down into simple steps: mixing, baking and coating the cake. So, have a go!

Janet, Camden foster carer



Pre-heat the oven to Gas Mark 4 (180°C).

Prepare a loaf tin with butter.

1) In a mixing bowl, put in all the ingredients - butter, flour, baking powder, eggs and lemon zest, finally adding 6oz of sugar.

Blend all the ingredients using either a food processor, a whisk, a blender or a wooden spoon until the mixture is smooth and thick.

Now take the mixture and spoon directly into the loaf tin. Use a spoon to level the surface.

2) Place the loaf tin in the oven (middle shelf) for 35 minutes or until it is well risen and golden brown.

To test if it is cooked, use a skewer to prod in the middle of the cake. When the skewer is withdrawn nice and clean, the cake is cooked; if not, place back in the oven for a few more minutes.

When the cake is cooked, remove from the oven to cool for 5 minutes - then place on a wire rack.

3) Now squeeze one lemon and mix 1 tsp of lemon juice with the remaining 4oz of granulated sugar to make a lemony sugar icing for the cake.

Using a skewer make 50-60 deep holes in the cake and spoon over the lemony sugar

Ingredients:

2 small unwaxed lemons
6oz unsalted butter (keep at room temperature)
plus extra butter to grease loaf tin with
7oz self-raising flour
1/2 tsp baking powder
3 large eggs
10oz granulated sugar

coating. Leave to set for 1 hour until the lemony sugar icing is crystallised.

I hope you enjoy it.

To share your favourite recipes with fellow foster carers, please email elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk

LAC Academy Awards 2012

Foster carers for the last few years have been encouraged to recommend looked after children (LAC) for an award from the LAC Academy, for their achievements at school, sports, drama etc. This year both mainstream and special needs children had a good representation. I had never been before, but was very impressed with the thought and time that went into the organisation of the day. The children were so pleased; they laughed, clapped and loved all the attention. Even my young one who has got special needs, used his award as a frisbee and laughed his head off as it flew through the air.

Tim Aldridge presented the awards with the help of Sally Joseph. The LAC Academy were all there in full force, being supportive and making sure that children and their carers had their needs attended to. Many familiar faces were there too: Sally, Nuala, Councillors and people who are involved with Children's Services.

Thank goodness the rain held off. After the lovely breakfast, we headed through London on the DUCK tour and then onto the river Thames. The young ones were very impressed, so were the adults.

In the future if carers would like to nominate their young ones, please do so. It's not always easy for our children to achieve at school, because of different circumstances, but when they do, it is a cause for celebration, and we were so pleased for our young ones and all the other children and their carers.

Thank you all. It was a great day out, may it continue to be repeated for all our children that try so hard.



Moira Doneo MBE
Specialist foster carer

New membership benefits for Fostering Network members

Camden's Fostering Service provides membership of the Fostering Network for all its fostering households. As well as receiving Foster Care magazine and having access to a 24-hour legal helpline and legal protection insurance, members now get the following:

- **Money off days out for the family**

Foster carer members can now get up to 52% off entry to the UK's top attractions, such as Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Chessington World of Adventures, SeaLife Centres across the UK, Madame Tussauds London & Blackpool, Legoland Windsor & Manchester, The Dungeons and Warwick Castle.

- **Discounts on home insurance**

All members of the Fostering Network receive a 10% discount on comprehensive and flexible household insurance specifically developed for foster carers, provided by Towergate Insurance. Key features include:

- o Cover for any malicious damage or vandalism caused by a fostered child
- o Cover for theft or attempted theft by any fostered child
- o No need to contact Towergate each time you take in a new placement, as this won't restrict or void the cover provided
- o Cover for all foster children's possessions while they are in your care.

- **Mortgage and financial advice service**

Foster carers often struggle to find a suitable mortgage and get the right financial advice, so the Fostering Network has partnered with Endsleigh to launch a new financial advice service. Endsleigh has already helped over 100 foster carers secure a mortgage in the past 12 months, including many who have been declined before because of their status as a foster carer. Members of the Fostering Network will get an exclusive 40% discount on the fee for the first initial completed mortgage. This dedicated service also provides member-exclusive advice on other financial matters such as tax and retirement planning.

Find out more about how to access all of these new benefits by visiting www.fostering.net/member-offers

Spread the word

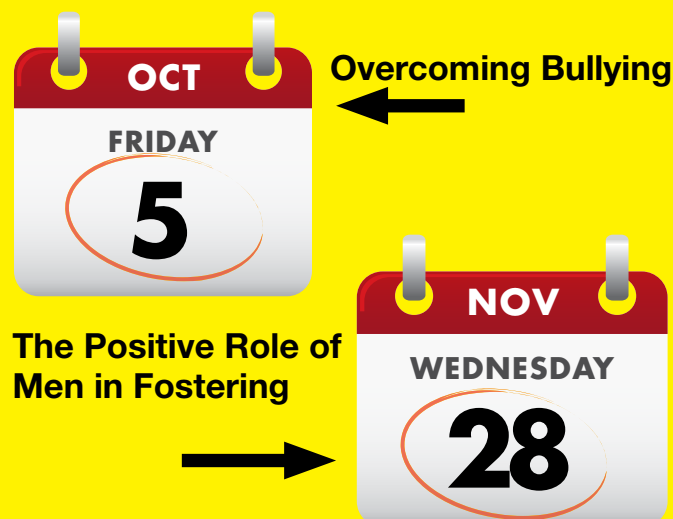
Please join us in our efforts to recruit more foster carers. For every person/couple you refer to us that is successfully approved as a Camden foster carer, you will receive a reward of £250. We hold open information evenings throughout the year for prospective carers to come and meet our team.

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.

Upcoming training for foster carers at Vadnie Bish House:



Foster carer awards 2012

The fantastic work of Camden's foster carers was recognised at a special awards ceremony on Friday 18 May at the Holiday Inn in Camden Lock.

Awards were presented by legendary actor Melvyn Hayes who came all the way from the Isle of Wight to recognise and reward the borough's foster carers for

long service of five, ten and fifteen years.

The gathering was a unique opportunity for Camden to celebrate your hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to caring for children. Events like this help to highlight the urgent need for more foster carers to come

forward to bring a sense of family and inclusion to vulnerable children.



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



Camden foster carers Charlotte and Mary receive their 5 year long service award from actor Melvyn Hayes

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."

In total, 13 awards were presented. Previous events have been attended by acting legend Sir Derek Jacobi, Madness lead singer Suggs and singer Sinitta.

The fostering awards

Once again, the Awards have been and gone, an opportunity at the end of a long working week for carers and staff to put on our bling and glad rags.

It was really nice to meet our special guest Melvyn Hayes. He really knows what it is to be a foster carer with our mixed emotions that can change on a daily basis or from one hour to the next, depending on what is going on with the child/children you're looking after. I looked around the room and I thought so many people from different walks of life, all beaming in to the one subject close to all of our hearts: 'children and how best to meet their needs'.

The Mayor, Councillors and other representatives all appeared to be relaxed and to enjoy themselves. Ann Baxter and Anne Turner were both there, as were the

team managers, social workers and Principal Officers. As always, not everyone was able to turn up due to babysitting issues, as the needs of children came first.

The fostering world is unique, not two people that I have ever met foster for the same reasons. It makes for a very interesting group of people, who all in their own way have a lot to contribute.

We also have to thank Elias for organising the event and the photographer, Patrick Dodds. A big thank you from all of us.

John & Moira Doneo M.B.E.
Specialist Foster Carers



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



Eileene Shapland
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



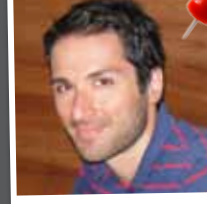
Ewa Remon
Supervising social worker



Oonagh Hodges
Supervising social worker



Raj Munisami
Supervising social worker



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 or call 020 7974 1152.

Fostering Team

Camden Council
Children, schools and families
Family Services and Social Work
Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
London NW1 1BD
email: fosteringteam@camden.gov.uk
Phone: 0800 0281 436
Fax: 020 7974 6799

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.

Published September 2012. Produced by Camden Design 11/12 1188.12 Tel. 020 7974 1985