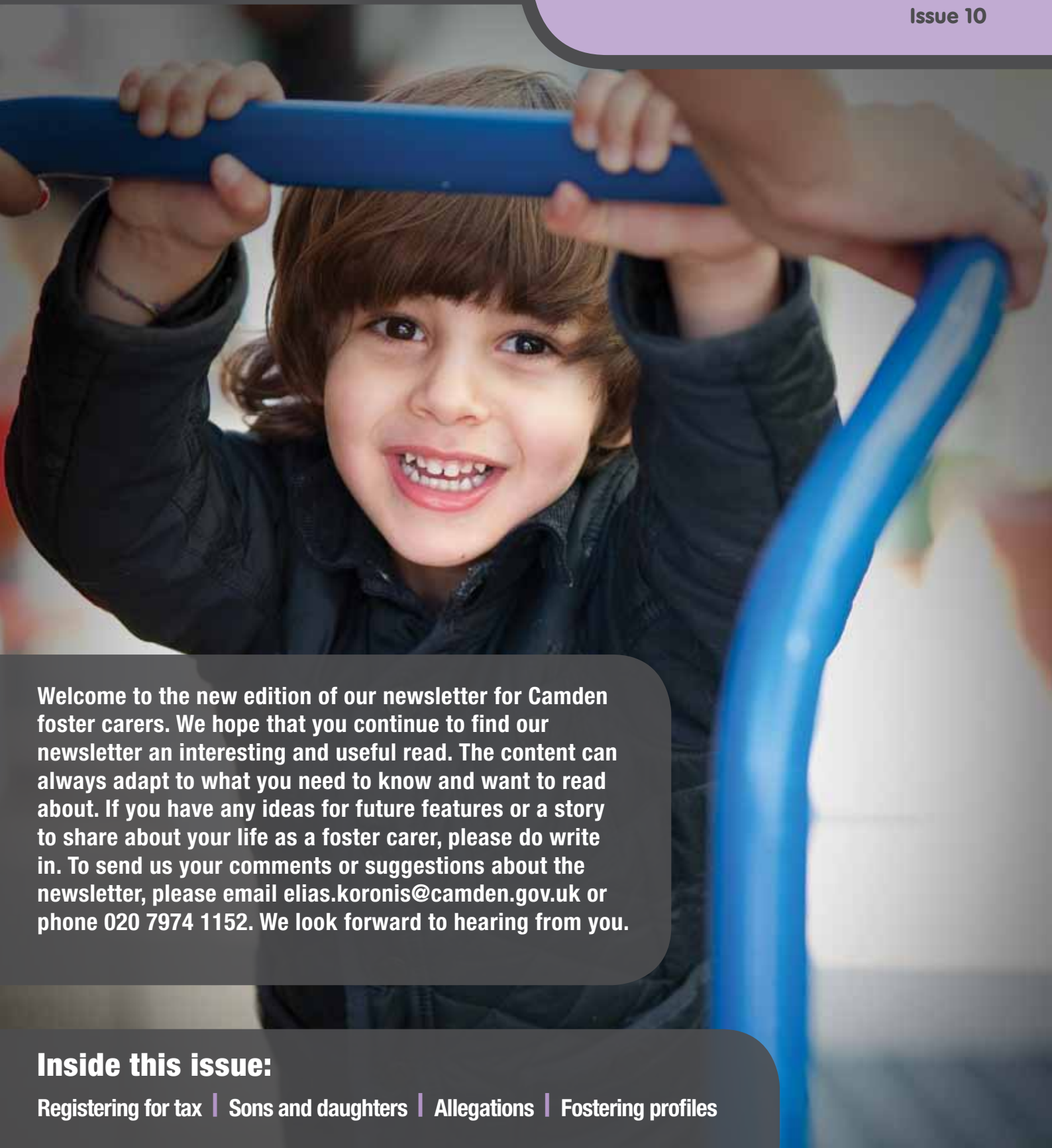


Reach Out

Camden foster carers Newsletter

Issue 10



Welcome to the new edition of our newsletter for Camden foster carers. We hope that you continue to find our newsletter an interesting and useful read. The content can always adapt to what you need to know and want to read about. If you have any ideas for future features or a story to share about your life as a foster carer, please do write in. 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:

Registering for tax | Sons and daughters | Allegations | Fostering profiles

CAFC

Camden's Association of Foster Carers (CAFC) provides foster 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

The Foster Carers Charter

In light of the launch of the Foster Carers Charter by Children's Minister Tim Loughton, Camden Fostering Service has been in consultations with CAFC in order to write a Foster Carers Charter for Camden's carers. This charter will provide staff, managers and carers with a framework for partnership working. Our aim is to make sure that all looked after children in Camden get the best care possible. Camden recognises and values the important role that Camden's foster carers play in providing this excellent care to our looked after children. The Foster Carers Charter for Camden is due to be launched very soon. A copy of the Charter will be sent to every foster carer soon after the launch event.



Dear foster carers,


I am very pleased to be able to invite you again to the wonderful Adventure Island in Southend on Sea to enjoy a fun packed day for all the family. To find out more about this amazing fun park, please visit www.adventureisland.co.uk

The whole day is FREE for foster children and foster carers, and the coach is free to all friends and relatives, but they will have to pay their own entrance fee to the park. As long as you book early, we will purchase the tickets for you at a cheaper 'group bookings' rate.

The day out is booked for Saturday 16 June. Please contact John Doneo by phone on 020 8386 3747 or by emailing jdoneo@ntlworld.com by noon on 1 June.

It's a first come first served event, so don't put it off. Please book now to secure your place and avoid disappointment.

*John Doneo
Chair CAFC*



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.

Checks and medicals

We are now working towards getting reviews to panel in a timely manner. In order to meet timescales, it's very important that foster carers support us in completing all the required checks. Booking and attending medicals needs to be a priority. When medicals are sent to you, please make an appointment with your GP and inform your supervising social worker of the medical appointment date.

Spotlight on Patricia Winter Camden foster carer



Patricia was approved as a Camden foster carer in 2010. Here she talks about the assessment process and her experiences as a foster carer so far.

How did you get into fostering?

My friend became a foster carer and needed extra support with her child in placement. I was asked if I would be able to help with respite, escorting and baby-sitting. I was happy to help, so I went through an assessment and a police check and when I was approved, I was able to support my friend and her foster child.

After a short time I was approached and asked if I would be available to do some work with other children and support other foster carers. I really enjoyed this work and started working with other children of all ages.

I was then asked by a supervising social worker if I ever thought about becoming a foster carer. I hadn't thought about it, but the thought was playing on my mind. I enquired about what I needed to do and it all went from there.

How did you find the assessment process?

The assessment process can vary in time. I had been working with Camden for quite a while and had a lot of experience, so this made the process a bit shorter. The assessment lasted

around 6 weeks, with 2 or 3 sessions per week depending on my schedule. This part of the approval process covered everything, from relationships with boyfriends, family and friends, to work experience and other life experiences. It gave me the chance to understand what fostering entailed, my responsibilities as a foster carer and what was expected of me, the support I would get and how important it is to have good support networks.

Sometimes it was hard to talk about the past, but I also found it great too. I realised how far I had come and the reasons why I may have reacted or dealt with past relationships or situations the way I did. It was a real eye opener and made me feel really proud and empowered.

How would you describe your experience as a foster carer so far?

My experiences have been positive and I have really enjoyed taking care of the children in my care. At times it has been hard, mainly due to sleepless nights, but when you wake up to a big smile it makes it all worth it.

My first placement was very busy, with daily contact arrangements, but with my current child placement, there is no contact, so I have learned that no two children's situations are the same and the experiences are very different. I have a lot more time to plan my days with my placement now. We can make appointments or arrange days out even weeks in advance, which is very nice. When your foster child has frequent contact plans, your days can be very busy.

I have a great support network and my friends and family play a big part in mine and my foster child's life. I feel that this has brought us closer as a family, which is fantastic. We all arrange days out and my foster child has been welcomed into our family with open arms.

What have been the highlights or challenges?

I have had so many highlights within this job. Just watching your foster child develop is amazing. Every day they are learning and experiencing new things and you are there to see this and aid their development, which is so rewarding. There are challenges too. Some children will not open up or talk, which can be quite hard, especially because all you want to do is help them and you know there is something they may want to say. This is where patience and perseverance pays off; when a child trusts you, they will feel more comfortable to open up. Some children will never do this, but the fact you're there and they feel safe means a lot to a child. Just knowing you are providing a safe, calm environment is sometimes all you can do. It's a great feeling and you are fulfilling your role as a foster carer.

Would you encourage others to explore fostering?

I would most definitely encourage others to be foster carers. You just need to have patience and loads of love to give. To me this is the perfect job! I get so much from seeing the children in my care thrive and move on to live their life as the confident, loved and amazing children that they are.

Sons and Daughters event

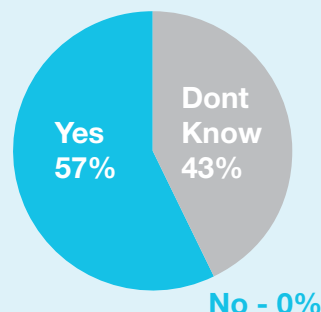
In October last year, we joined the national campaign 'Sons and Daughters Week' to recognise and celebrate the contribution of the children of Camden foster carers to the fostering experience. Members of the Young People Forum (Children in Care Council) helped to host a fun event at a bowling and ice-skating centre.

The event was a unique opportunity for us to thank these children and show our appreciation. It was also an opportunity to consult with children of foster carers about their experience of having a foster child

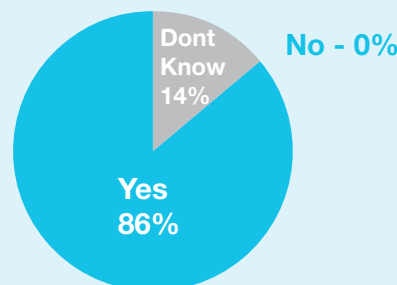
living with them and what support they would like from our Service. Fostering has a huge impact on the whole household and it is essential that this is both recognised and celebrated.

The consultation part of the event focused on questions around the support sons and daughters currently receive from their social worker and whether they want to meet more regularly with other sons and daughters of foster carers. Some of the feedback from the consultation segment of the event is given below.

Do you enjoy being part of a family that fosters?



Would you like to meet again with other children whose families foster?



What support and information would you like from the social worker who visits you and your parent(s)?

To be given the opportunity to talk about how I feel

To be able to visit children who have left our household

To know more about the activities the foster children like to do before they are placed with us

Social workers to share with us information about past problems the foster children may have experienced

The department has agreed that we need to ensure the individual needs of sons and daughters of foster carers are recognised and that relevant support is provided. We have agreed to:

- Develop a regular programme of meetings and events for sons and daughters of foster carers
- Include a specific session for sons and daughters of foster carers in the Skills to Foster training

- Review the Annual Review Comments Form to ensure that sons and daughters of foster carers can fully engage and provide feedback on their experience
- Ensure that during home visits social workers give individual time to sons and daughters.

Foster carer profiles

As many of you already know, we are in the process of creating a flyer for each fostering household, so that children and young people can read this information prior to their placement. Each fostering household will need to have their own flyer, with information about the carer(s), their house, their family members, the house rules and chores and the activities they like to do with their family and the children they foster. These profiles will also

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include photographs of the carer(s) and their family members who will also have contact with the foster child. We would also like to have pictures of the house, including the room the foster child will be living in. To see a sample of an existing foster carer's profile, please speak to your supervising social worker or contact Elias Koronis on 020 7974 1152 or email elias.koronis@camden.gov.uk

We ask every foster carer to write a few words about themselves and to email us a few photographs, so that Elias can put together a profile for each fostering household.

Registering for tax – what do foster carers need to know?



The tax year ended on the 5th April 2012 – do you know what your tax responsibilities are?

Since April 2003, all foster carers have been treated as self-employed and are expected to register. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) introduced a specific tax scheme for foster carers ('foster care relief').

In April 2010, foster care relief was extended and renamed 'qualifying care relief'.

The qualifying care relief covers foster care, shared lives care (formerly called adult placement), staying put care (where a young person who was fostered remains past their 18th birthday), and -when some expected legal changes are made- will cover parent and child care (where the parent may be aged 18+, or the child may not be a looked after child).

Many foster carers have little or no taxable profit from fostering, because the qualifying care relief is generous. But all foster carers are expected to register as self-employed with HMRC, and must declare any profit.

To calculate your taxable profit you need to:

- Work out your tax-free 'qualifying amount' by adding together two elements:

A basic element of £10,000 per household per tax year (pro rata for foster carers newly approved part-way through the tax year)

plus

A child element, for each week (or part week) a child is placed, of:

- £200 per week per child aged under 11
- £250 per week per child aged 11+

Example: child aged 8 is placed for a full year (6th April to 5th April). Basic element £10,000 plus child element £200 x 52 weeks ie £10,400.

Therefore TOTAL qualifying amount is £10,000 + £10,400 = £20,400

- Work out your actual payments from your fostering service for the year (6th April to 5th April). This is everything paid to you by your fostering service including fostering allowances, fee or reward payments, holiday or birthday allowances, mileage and any other expenses.

- Now work out your profit – by deducting your 'qualifying amount' from your actual payments. If the qualifying amount is more than the actual payments, the profit is zero.

You can register with HMRC without first doing this calculation, but it may help to know your taxable profit (if any) when you register. For instance, if your profit from foster care is zero, you may not have to complete a self-assessment tax return. However, if you are sent one, you must complete and return it.

It is also useful to think about national insurance (NI) – class 2 NI paid by self-employed people was £2.50 per week in 2011/12 (£2.65 from April 2012). If your taxable profit from foster care (calculated as above) is below £5,315 for the year (2011-12) you can apply to HMRC for a certificate of 'small earnings exception' if you prefer not to pay NI. However, do ensure that your state pension is protected if you choose not to pay.

Further sources of information and advice:

The Fostering Network

Their booklet 'Income tax and national insurance – information for foster carers' is updated each year, costs £2 for members, and members who sign in to their website can read it online or download it for free.

Web: www.fostering.net

Tel: 020 7620 6400 (for training, publications and general information).

Fosterline

The confidential advice line for foster carers, can answer foster carers' questions about tax, national insurance, pensions and registering as self-employed.

Tel: 0800 040 7675
Monday-Friday 9am-5pm.

Email: fosterline@fostering.net

HM Revenue and Customs

Registering as self-employed.

Tel: 0845 915 4515
Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 8am-4pm (HMRC's helpline for the newly self-employed).

Web: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/selfemployed/>

HMRC's Helpsheet HS236 (Qualifying care relief) can be found online: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/helpsheets/hs236.pdf>

Remember you're a member!

Did you know that as a foster carer for Camden you are a member of the Fostering Network? Here at Camden we know how important it is that foster carers are able to access expert, impartial and independent advice, information and support whenever you need it. That is why we provide you with membership of the Fostering Network.

Legal representation and expert advice

Your membership means that you are entitled to legal representation from an experienced solicitor in case of any legal expenses that arise as a result of fostering. You can also access high quality, independent advice, support and information. You also have access to a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week legal helpline where you can speak to professionally qualified lawyers to help you with any issue (it does not have to be fostering specific).

Information and resources

All members receive a subscription to Foster Care magazine, a quarterly publication providing news, information and features on fostering. Through the members' area of the Fostering Network website - www.fostering.net/membership - you can also access exclusive resources on fostering such as the 'Signposts through Fostering' booklets and information about dealing with social networking.

Part of the fostering community

As members you are part of a unique national community which brings together everyone involved in fostering to influence positive change in fostering. Why not check out www.facebook.com/thefosteringnetwork to chat to other members across the country? The Fostering Network will also be launching a new online community in spring 2012, which will give members a user-friendly space for collaboration and peer to peer support, and access to expertise and trusted information resources.

About the Fostering Network

As a charity, the Fostering Network has 36 years' experience of supporting foster carers and works tirelessly with the aim of ensuring that foster care works for every fostered child and every foster family. They campaign for investment in foster care at a national and local level, share good practice, promote

a positive image of foster care in the media and much more. Their work has led to simplifying the tax system for carers, improving understanding around delegated authority and setting out procedures around allegations amongst other things. You can find out more and see how you can get involved in work like this by visiting the website at www.fostering.net

How do I access support from the Fostering Network?

The Fostering Network can provide you with the support you need. Make sure you know how to access it:

Fosterline: the confidential advice line for foster carers is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and provides independent, impartial advice about fostering issues. Tel 0800 040 7675
Email fosterline@fostering.net

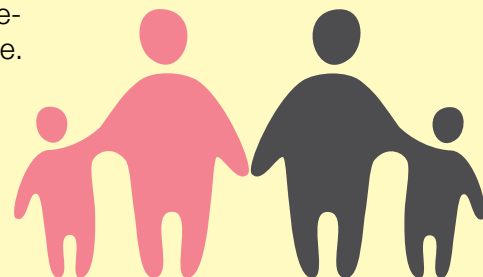
Information line: provides information on general fostering queries and is open from 10am - 4pm Monday to Friday. Tel 020 7261 1884
Email info@fostering.net

Legal, medical and stress counselling helplines: these helplines are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can speak to professionally qualified lawyers and nurses to help you through any issue (it does not have to be fostering specific). Three helplines, just one handy number. Tel 0844 581 0404

Find out more on www.fostering.net

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.

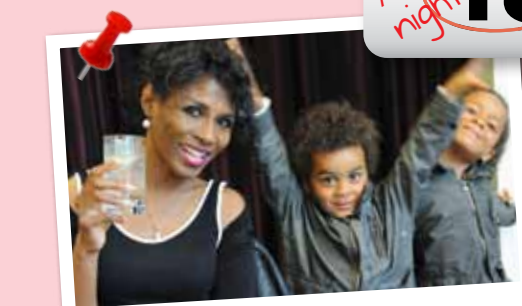


Foster carer awards 2012

Foster Care Fortnight is an annual campaign that helps to raise the profile of fostering and attract new foster carers. This year Foster Care Fortnight takes place from 14 to 27 May. To coincide with this national campaign, we will be holding our annual foster carer award ceremony on Friday 18 May at our usual venue - the Holiday Inn in Camden Lock.

Camden foster carers will have already received an invitation letter asking them to RSVP by Monday 23 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.

Previous events have been attended by acting legend Sir Derek Jacobi, Madness lead singer Suggs and singer Sinitta, who congratulated carers for their services to Camden's looked after children and personally handed out the awards and certificates.



Sinitta with her two children



Sir Derek Jacobi

Photographs by Patrick Dodds



Allegations Support Scheme

The North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium (NLAFC) is a partnership of five local authority fostering agencies: Camden, Barnet, Enfield, Islington and Haringey. NLAFC has developed a small pool of four independent social workers who can provide support to foster carers and their families subject to an allegation or serious quality of care issue. The social workers reflect the diversity of the carers within the Consortium and have the requisite skills and experience for this work. The social workers have been given relevant induction training to prepare and equip them for this work. The service is monitored by the NLAFC Fostering Managers Group. All the independent

social workers are CRB checked, GSCC registered, have Public Liability insurance and have two supporting professional references.

The Team Manager of each Fostering Service will refer cases directly to the independent social workers. They will detail the nature of the referral, the work to be undertaken and arrangements for the social workers to come back to them with any issues needing further consultation. Peter Stevens, NLAFC Manager, will be informed by the Fostering Team Manager of the relevant service, when a referral is made, so that he can monitor use of the scheme.

The scheme commenced on 1 November 2011.

Thank you

As you may now, Ofsted recently inspected Safeguarding and Provision for looked-after children across Camden. Such inspections are a legal requirement and occur on a regular basis. The inspectors' feedback is that they found children's services in Camden to be solidly good across

safeguarding and looked-after children, and confirmed that during the two weeks of fieldwork and review of over 60 case files, they found no instances of any child being unsafe. We would like to thank all our foster carers for your contribution to the inspection. A big thank you to our foster carers who also participated in interviews with the inspectors.

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



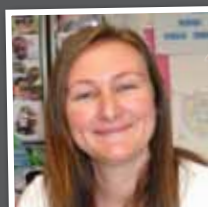
Yasmin Iyyaz
Senior Practitioner



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



Raj Munisami
Supervising social worker



Barbara Lucas
Supervising social worker



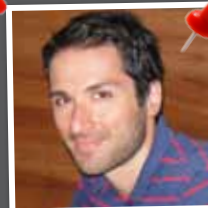
Ewa Remon
Supervising social worker



Oonagh Hodges
Supervising social worker



Carreen Wisdom
Student social worker



Elias Koronis
Marketing Officer



Mandip Takhar
Admin Assistant

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.

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