

# Make all the difference

Become a  
Tower Hamlets  
Specialist  
Foster Carer and  
change lives



TOWER HAMLETS

# What could be more rewarding than turning a young person's life around?

If you have experience of working with young people with challenging needs, you could be perfect as a specialist foster carer. Your experience could make all the difference in helping children by being able to offer them a level of empathy and understanding they have not experienced before.

## What is specialist foster care?

Tower Hamlets' specialist fostering scheme is a challenging but hugely rewarding role caring for young people aged 11-17 years.

These young people will have had very difficult experiences and may have a history of previously failed foster placements. They will have spent much of their childhood feeling unsafe and uncared for. Some will be out of school, have little routine in their lives and may feel rejected, unhappy or rebellious.

### **But it is not too late to turn things around.**

We're looking for foster carers who can offer heaps of empathy, understanding and patience. Specialist carers will be able to build positive relationships with the young person in their care and help them to see a positive future for themselves.



**“ There’s no such thing as a bad kid, they’ve just had some really bad things happen to them. When you start to understand their experiences, their behaviour makes sense and then you can start to do something positive about it to make changes.”**

## Who needs specialist foster care?

Young people needing a specialist foster carer 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
- They may have been in trouble with the police
- They may be at risk of sexual exploitation or be exposed to drugs or gangs



## This is Ruby's story

Ruby was born into an environment where she regularly witnessed her father being violent towards her mother and never received any form of affection from her mother. Over the years, Ruby witnessed the endless fights and arguments which affected her parent's ability to care for her and as Ruby grew older, she too began fighting with her parents, peers and teachers; she had learnt the only way to get what you want was through aggression and intimidation. At home, Ruby would be either witnessing her parents fight or be fighting with them herself, often to try and protect her mother who would then blame Ruby for the arguments and call her names. Worryingly, Ruby spent some time sleeping on the streets following these arguments.

At the age of 12, Ruby's parents decided they could no longer manage her behaviour at home; taking little responsibility for their impact on her emotional health. They agreed she could be placed in foster care. Ruby felt rejected and began to stay out late, drink alcohol with her friends and she began using drugs. Ruby started mixing with people much older than her, who told her they would "take care of her."

Ruby would regularly go missing from her fostering placement and return hungry, looking dishevelled and would then often self-harm. Ruby was at high risk of child sexual exploitation; she was often under the influence of alcohol or drugs and was continually answering calls at all hours and would leave the house late at night. If Ruby was challenged, she would be violent and aggressive; something she had learnt from her time at home. This led to Ruby being moved 6 times in less than 2 years to different placements. Ruby now resides between friends and home due to a shortage of suitable fostering placements that can meet her emotional needs.

- **Could you be the one person in Ruby's life to make a difference?**
- **Could you be the one who doesn't reject her, even when she pushes the boundaries?**
- **Could you be the one to teach Ruby self-worth?**
- **Could you be the one to show Ruby care, compassion and love?**



**Could you be the  
one that changes  
Ruby's life?**

## What will I receive?

As a Tower Hamlets specialist foster carer you will receive:

- Allowances of £750 per week
- Retainers of £450 per week (up to 4 weeks)
- 24 hours specialist support
- On-going training to meet children's needs
- A dedicated social worker offering support and supervision
- Clinical group supervision
- Personalised support package to meet the needs of the young person
- Clinical one-to-one monthly supervision
- 2 weeks paid holiday per year



## Could I be a specialist foster carer?

You need previous experience of being around young people who have 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 build their self-esteem.

You will not be left on your own; you will be part of a professional team all working closely together. Everyone involved will be fully committed to supporting young people to make positive changes in their lives.

You don't need to live in Tower Hamlets but must have a spare room and no other young children living at home.

**To become a specialist foster carer you should:**

- Have a spare room
- Have no younger children in the house
- One carer should be available full time (if carers are a couple, the other carer can be employed full time)

**“ You have to be able to stick with these young people, through all the challenges. When they see you’re not going anywhere, the trust slowly starts building.”**



## What skills do specialist carers need?

- Experience of working with young people
- Understanding of challenging behaviour and the problems young people face today
- Able to work with difficult issues exhibited by young people
- Able to build positive relationships with teenagers, to encourage and support their interests and develop their self esteem
- Able to listen to young people’s wishes and feelings
- Able to understand and respond to young people’s emotional needs
- Able to communicate effectively and non-judgementally often in highly emotional situations
- Able to set and maintain clear boundaries
- Able to work as a strong advocate for young people
- Able to work closely with other agencies including schools, police, probation, courts and social care
- Able to engage with other professionals in reviews and conferences
- Available to travel with the young person to school and appointments when needed
- Able to keep detailed records

## How to become a specialist foster carer with Tower Hamlets

Contact us on 0800 279 9850 for a chat about the scheme and to explore together if specialist fostering is for you.

If appropriate, we can then visit you at home to discuss it further. If all goes well, we will ask you to fill in an application form to start off the necessary checks and references. You will also be invited to the 4 day Skills to Foster training course. You will be allocated a social worker who will visit you regularly at home to write an assessment on your suitability to foster. Finally, you will need to attend the fostering panel; a group of friendly people all with experience of fostering who will ask you a few questions.

It should take 4-6 months for you to be approved as a specialist foster carer from when your application is received.

If you have any questions about specialist fostering, please get in touch:

Call **0800 279 9850** or email **[fostering@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@towerhamlets.gov.uk)**





Fostering

**Tower Hamlets Fostering**

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