

Fostering Newsletter

Winter 2016

Featured in this issue

- Children's Christmas Party
- Brent resident awarded MBE for fostering for 31 years
- Brent Foster Carers – a champion's story
- LGBT Fostering and Adoption Week
- Resignation of Foster Carers

A night of celebration for Brent's hardworking fostering community

Brent's talented and hardworking foster carers enjoyed a night of celebration at the council's annual Foster Carers' Ball held at The Crown Moran Hotel, Cricklewood on Saturday 5 December 2015.

The evening encompassed a 3 course dinner and drinks, entertainment from Mr. Cee, dancing and raffle prizes from the Tricycle Theatre and Reed Recruitment. Each fostering household also received a free ice skating ticket courtesy of Wembley Park. It was certainly an evening to remember for six of our fantastic foster carers who received awards for 'going the extra mile' in their fostering role. A special long service

award was given to Patrice Thomas, who has fostered for Brent for an exceptional 31 years and is still going strong.

Councillor Ruth Moher, Lead Member for Children and Young People, said:

"This evening honours all the extraordinary people who work hard to make sure that children who are unable to live with their birth families have the stability, love and support that they deserve. At Brent we strongly believe in supporting our foster carers so they can provide the best possible care to our children and young people in need."



From left to right; Cllr. Jones (Brent Mayor), Joy Gibbs (foster carer), Nigel Chapman (Head of Service)



From left to right; Cllr. Moher (Lead Member for Children and Young People), Nadia Christie (foster carer), Nigel Chapman (Head of Service)



Children's Christmas party

Varghese Thekkan (Social Worker)



Message from Head of Service

Dear Foster Carers,

A happy new year to you all from everyone here in Placements. I hope that you have had a positive start to the New Year and are full of energy and enthusiasm for the year ahead. We are always looking to recruit new foster carers and have started January with our 'Make a Difference' campaign that aims to encourage people to come forward and foster. We know from our research that people take months if not years to think about fostering and sometimes they need a little bit of encouragement to take that step. We have had some encouraging signs in the first few weeks of the campaign and hope this continues. Also don't forget that we are still offering £500 referral reward scheme for those of you that refer someone who goes on to become an approved foster carer.

It was great to see so many of you at the annual foster carer awards and celebration evening in December. It was a great night and our chance to say thank you for the work you put in on our behalf day in and out. A special mention must go to Patrice Thomas who was singled out for an MBE in the New Years' Honours List. Patrice has been such a great servant to Brent's children over so many years and it was so lovely to see this recognised.

Please remember that we offer a varied and interesting range of training for your benefit. I must remind carers that it is an expectation of your role that you commit to complete training agreed with your Supervising Social Worker – we have had really positive feedback about the courses so do take advantage of what is on offer.

I hope to see many of you at the various events and training courses over the coming months, with very best wishes, **Nigel**

Foster carers and children alike all had a great time at the recent children's Christmas party held on Saturday 12 December 2015 at Poplar Grove Youth Centre. There was plenty of food and games for everyone with gifts for the children donated generously by Brent Council staff. Thank you to everyone who helped on the day.

Staff Updates

The New Year has brought some changes for the team. We sadly say goodbye to social workers Giselle Phillips and Trude Adewoyin and welcome social workers Rebecca Beazley, Alisa Goldstein and Sonia Bello.

We are also happy to announce that Lorea Boneke and Serifat Bakare have both welcomed beautiful, healthy babies to their families at the end of 2015.

Foster Carers Support Group

The foster carers support group is your opportunity to meet other foster carers and share your experiences and support one another in your fostering role. The sessions are held at Brent Civic Centre, on the first floor training suite area on the following dates. Please note the time/theme will be confirmed nearer the time and an invitation will be sent to all carers via email before the session.

- Tuesday 9 February 2016 (Evening)
- Tuesday 8 March 2016 (Day)

Training and Support Update January 2016

Please see the list of training courses with spaces in February and March 2016. If you are interested in attending any of these courses please speak to your supervising social worker or contact me directly. Please note some courses have limited spaces.

Zak Darwood - Fostering Development Coordinator
0208 937 4458 or 07788 335717 (also on whatsapp)
zak.darwood@brent.gov.uk

28th January	10-1pm	Adolescent Development - Puberty and Hygiene
2nd Feb	10-3pm	Re-Parenting Attachment Disordered Traumatized Children and Young People
9th Feb	1-4pm	First Aid for Carers
9th Feb	6-9pm	First Aid for Carers
17th Feb	10-1pm	TSDS
17th Feb	1-4pm	Administration of Medication
18th Feb	1-4pm	Attachment
19th Feb	1-4pm	Professional Boundaries
22nd Feb	6-8pm	Comments and Complaints
25th Feb	10-1pm	Working with LGBT Young People
2nd March	10-2pm	Communication and Managing Conflict 0-12
5th March	2:15 - 5pm	Level 1 Safeguarding
10th March	10-1pm	Delegated Authority
10th March	1-4pm	Safer Caring
15th March	10-1pm	Aim Higher: Education for Looked after Children
15th March	1-4pm	Child Protection - Advanced for Carers
16th March	10-3pm	Working with Young People towards Independence
16th March	6 - 9pm	Working with Sexually Active Young People
18th March	10-1pm	Introduction to Working with Children with Disabilities
18th March	1-4pm	TSDS
23rd March	10-3pm	Working with Violent and Aggressive Young People

**Further information on each of the courses can be found in the Course Overviews Brochure.*

Fostering Network to support Brent foster carers

From the 1st April 2016 we will be changing our providers from Foster Talk to Fostering Network. All fostering households will receive a welcome pack and contact details around this date. Full information regarding benefits and how to access these will be included in the April edition of the Foster Carers newsletter.

ID Badges for Brent foster carers

We are rolling out I.D. Badges for all our foster carers. To make sure you get yours, please send a 'selfie' (a picture of yourself) to Zak Darwood on **07788 335717** with your name and contact details. If you don't have access to a mobile phone, please email a photo to Zak.Darwood@brent.gov.uk

We need long term foster parents... Can you help?

In Brent we have several children in need of long term placements. We need families who can provide long term stability and commitment. If you would like to discuss the profiles below or have any questions please call **0778 838 9531** or email Tanika.buchanan@brent.gov.uk

Amir

Amir is aged 9 and is of British Pakistani origin. He has been in the care of Brent since 2014 due to his mother not being able to look after him. Amir is a charming and energetic young person who can be very polite to others and well behaved. Amir is interested in sports and music, in particular cricket, which he plays at school and says he enjoys "more than anything".

Amir was diagnosed with a form of ADHD in 2012. This is managed without medication. Amir's behaviour can be challenging and unpredictable at times, however, CAMHS is working with Amir to help him manage his emotional and behavioural issues. He is also receiving art therapy once a week and 1-1 mentoring support at his school.

Amir has experienced severe instability and insecurity under his mother's care during the early stages of his life. This is why it's important for Amir to have a permanent family who can provide him with a safe, secure and stable environment so he can develop well into adulthood.

Rebecca

Rebecca is aged 8 and of British White Irish origin. Rebecca is a very friendly, talkative child who enjoys the company of other children and 1:1 attention from adults. She loves reading, swimming and attends Irish dance classes.

Rebecca was born with Noonan's Syndrome, a genetic disorder, which means

she is smaller than her peers and struggles with some physical tasks. Rebecca does have a good understanding of rules and does not have any difficulty listening and following instructions.

We are looking for patient, nurturing carers who can promote Rebecca's emotional, social, cultural and emotional needs until she is 18. This includes accompanying Rebecca to church and living within commutable distance of her current school in Perivale. Rebecca finds it difficult to express her feelings, so the carer must be willing to emotionally support her and help her to find ways of expressing her thoughts and feelings. Rebecca said she would like to live somewhere with other children and animals.

Xander

Xander is aged 7 and is of Black British Caribbean origin. He was placed from birth in foster care due to the risk of neglect.

Xander is a very likeable, humorous and loving child with a lot to give. He is fun loving and responds well to patient care and support. He loves being in a family unit and relates to his current carers as being his family. Due to his autism he has some difficulties picking up on the social clues from other children of his age, however he relates well to older children and young people. He is creative and loves art. He has a great memory and was recently awarded a certificate for kindness to another child in class.

Xander needs carers who are patient and supportive of his needs. We feel that he may benefit from a two parent family, where he has a full time carer who has knowledge and experience of supporting children with autism. Xander needs a family where he can grow to become a member of the household and experience a home life that offers stability, love and commitment.

Message from Cecilia Gabriel, Fostering Team Manager:

Foster carers who are thinking about resigning from fostering

Over the last year we have seen some of our foster carers resign from fostering for a variety of reasons. Some carers have resigned because they feel that their fostering career has come to a natural end and now wish to retire. Other carers have had a new addition to their families and can no longer foster whilst some carers have had started a new job or moved to a neighbouring borough and wish to pursue other opportunities.

We know that fostering can be a challenging task, which takes a lot of patience, dedication and commitment. However, we would like to ask you to take your time when you are making the decision on whether you wish to continue to foster as the process of terminating your approval has changed.

If you decide to stop fostering and you formally resign in writing, the Local Authority has to accept your resignation. This period lasts for 28 days and automatically once the 28 days have expired, you are no longer a foster carer. We have found that a lot of foster carers are not aware of this and have tried to re-trace their resignation. However, this is no longer allowed under the current legislation.

What does this mean for you?

This means that should you decide to continue with fostering, you will have to be completely reassessed and presented back to the Fostering panel for approval.

What should I do if I am thinking of leaving?

I would encourage all foster carers who are thinking of resigning or leaving the profession, to have a discussion with your Supervising Social Worker in the first instance. Alternatively, if you want to wish to speak to myself or Diana, we will be more than happy to arrange a time to talk with you and answer any questions that you may have.



**EARN
£500
IN CASH**

Referral Reward Scheme

As a Brent foster carer you are eligible to take part in our Referral Reward Scheme.

The Brent Placement Service will pay a "Referral Reward" to any Brent approved foster carer who successfully recommends a friend or family member to the Service. An initial £250 is paid when the referred person is approved at panel and a further £250 following their first placement.

Referrals can be made to our recruitment number **020 8937 4538** or email fostering@brent.gov.uk – quoting 'Referral Reward'.

Terms and Conditions

1: To qualify for the scheme; the prospective applicant must quote the Foster Carers name during the initial enquiry stage on the telephone or first home visit with assessing social worker.

This will be cross referenced to confirm connection.

2: Each 'Referral Reward' is based on one household.

Household

= A single applicant

= Joint applicants living in the same household making one application.

3: Payment will be authorised after the referred person has been approved at panel and could take up to 14 days to reach you.

4: Payments will be made by payment card.

5: Foster carers can make as many introductions as they wish. However there is no reward payable for general enquiries. Payments will **ONLY** be made at the following times; **after successful approval** of a referred applicant and **after placement of first child**.

6: The foster carer can receive up to £500 upon the referred person being approved and subsequently taking a placement.

**Do you know
someone that
is looking after
someone else's
child?**

Did you know that looking after a child that is not a close relative for over 28 consecutive days is called private fostering?

Private fostering is when a child under 16 (18 if they have additional, complex or severe needs) is cared for and provided with accommodation for more than 28 days by an adult who is not an immediate relative. This is a private arrangement made between the parent and carer.

Brent Council have a responsibility to ensure that all children in Brent are being cared for properly and carers are supported. If you know of a child who is being privately fostered please let us know.

www.brent.gov.uk/privatefostering

020 8937 2749

Points of contact

Fostering Duty Support – new duty number
Tel: **020 8937 3881**

Fostering Development Co-ordinator
Zak Darwood
Tel: **020 8937 4458**

LAC Nurses
Tel: **020 8795 6342**

LAC Participation Officer
Tel: **020 8937 4173**

LAC Education Team
Tel: **020 8937 4907**

Youth Offending Team
Tel: **020 8937 3832**

Brent Sexual Health Advisor
Tel: **020 8937 3083**

Brent Youth and Connexions Service
Tel: **020 8937 3680**

Wembley Centre for Health and Care
Tel: **020 8795 6000**

Brent Foster Carer - a champion's story



Community champions Andres Crespo (left) and Gayle Morris (right) with Brent Mayor (middle)

Local Brent foster carers, Gayle Morris and Andres Crespo, have been recognised for their hard work at the Community Champions Awards on the 5 November 2015. The awards, held annually every year, reward individuals who go above and beyond the call of duty in their voluntary work.

Gayle and Andres started fostering in April 2012 as short term Brent Foster Carers. From the beginning Andres and Gayle have worked really hard to provide a loving and stable home for the young person in their care, despite a number of difficulties which they have managed very positively. They have

worked well with all agencies and have really worked hard to develop their own skills so that they can make a difference to this young person.

Here's what Andres had to say about fostering for Brent:

"Fostering for Brent has changed our lives in so many ways. It has helped us to grow as individuals and be more patient and tolerant. It's even got me singing on my way to work! Our entire household has now come alive with lots of laughter and noise in the background."

When we received the Community Champions Award in November 2015 it brought about a mixture of feelings. On the one hand, we were so overwhelmed and pleased that there were people out there who believed we were doing a great job in fostering. Hurray! On the other hand there was also the acknowledgment that all foster carers in Brent are in fact Community Champions because we all strive for the same thing, to provide a child in need with a loving and supportive home."



Brent resident awarded MBE for fostering for 31 years

Kingsbury resident, Patrice Thomas, has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List for her outstanding contribution to children's services in Brent.

Patrice was originally approved as a foster carer in November 1984 and has since provided 155 vulnerable children with love, security and a place to call home. She is a highly experienced foster carer. Some of the young people she fostered had fled war or conflict in their home countries before arriving in the UK whilst others had come from troubling backgrounds locally.

Fostering Recruitment news



Social Worker Rebecca Beazely
recruiting foster carers at
Ealing Road Library
www.brent.gov.uk/fostering
020 8937 4538

A new year means a new wave of recruitment events to promote fostering in the community. This year there are over 300 children in care and we still need more people to come forward and help look after some of our most vulnerable children and young people. Please encourage your friends and family who may be interested in fostering to attend one of our outreach sessions. We will be here to answer all your questions and more.

- Harrow Leisure Centre, Friday 5 February, 10am – 2pm
- Brent Civic Centre Foyer, Wednesday 3 February, 11am – 2pm
- ASDA Park Royal, Thursday 11 February, 10am – 4pm
- Harlesden Library, 18 February, 1pm – 5pm
- Kingsbury Library, 7 March, 10am – 1pm

- Willesden Green Library, 7 March, 2pm – 6pm
- ASDA Park Royal, Thursday 10 March, 10am – 4pm
- Brent Civic Centre Foyer, Wednesday 9 March – 11am – 2pm
- Harrow Leisure Centre, Friday 18 March, 10am – 2pm

Fostering and adoption information evenings

The Placements Assessment and Recruitment team hosts information evenings each month for those who are thinking about fostering or possibly adoption. Sessions provide an insight into the assessment processes and are held on the first Thursday of the month Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, London HA9 0FJ at 5.45pm. Tea/Coffee and refreshments are available.

Patrice said: “I honestly didn’t expect this! I am so excited and happy to be receiving the MBE. It is a great honour to be recognised as a Brent foster carer, not just for myself but for all the other Brent foster carers who work hard to provide a loving home for children and young people in care.

“One of my foster children arrived with me when she was 12 and stayed with me until she was 18. We have a great relationship and keep in touch now. She says that I am like a mother to her. My own two children enjoyed growing up with extra siblings in the home.

- 4 February 2016
- 10 March 2016 – a special Information Evening to mark LGBT Fostering and Adoption Week
- 7 April 2016

If you would like more information; email or call the team on **020 8937 4538**, fostering@brent.gov.uk / adoption@brent.gov.uk

LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week

Brent will be hosting a series of outreach events to mark LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week during the 7 – 13 March 2016. A special information evening will be held on the 10 March to dispel myths around fostering and adoption and encourage prospective parents from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community to come forward and provide a loving home for a child in need. We especially need more foster carers for teenagers and siblings, who often have to wait the longest for a place to call home.

LGBT Week is supported by New Family Social, the UK support group for LGBT adopters and foster carers.



“Fostering is an incredibly rewarding experience and I would encourage anyone who has given fostering even half a thought to make the call and get some more information. For these children, there is simply no better way to help than fostering.”

February Half term activities



Maggie the Dragon and Friends Snap Happy Healthy Teeth Workshops

Join Maggie the Dragon, Al the Alligator and Flossie the Flossisaurus and find out how they keep their breath, teeth and mouth fresh by brushing in these dental health events at Bookstart Story and Rhyme Time under 5s sessions. Includes a film screening of Harry Takes a Trip to the Zoo where the animals tell him all about healthy eating and taking better care of your teeth.

- Monday 15 February, 10 - 10.30am at The Library at Willesden Green
- Tuesday 16 February, 11.15am - 12noon at Ealing Road Library
- Wednesday 17 February 2.15 - 3pm at Kingsbury Library
- Friday 19 February 10.30 - 11.30am at Wembley Library

Book Villains and Heroes

Create a book villain who wants to eat all the books and a hero who will try and stop them. For children aged 5 - 11. At the following libraries from 2.30pm - 3.30pm.

- Tuesday 16 February, Kingsbury Library and Kilburn Library
- Wednesday 17 February, Ealing Road Library and Harlesden Library Plus
- Thursday 18 February, The Library at Willesden Green and Wembley Library

To see what else is going at Brent Libraries visit www.brent.gov.uk/libraries

Care in Action Update (Brent Children in Care Council)

Bowling Trip

During the October half term, members and other looked after children and young people attended a trip to Tenpin in Acton. All who attended had a great time competing in their teams and catching up over lunch.

Director for Children and Young People Visit to Junior Care in Action

On 14th November, the Strategic Director for Children and Young People, Gail Tolley, visited Junior Care in Action at their monthly meeting. The children had the opportunity to share their 'flags for care' designs, ideas for a film project to support foster carers training and development as well as make pitta pizzas together.

Corporate Parenting Committee

The Vice-Chair and a member of Care in Action (CIA) attended the Corporate Parenting Committee in October where they met with the Strategic Director and Lead Member for Children and Young People, senior managers and elected members. The young people presented an update on their work and achievements as well as future plans.

JOIN US!

Junior Care in Action (7-12), Care in Action (13-17) and Care Leavers in Action (18+) are constantly looking to recruitment new members. If your foster child would be interested in becoming a change maker or you would like to have more information about what we do, please contact Shirley Ricketts on [07867 184047](tel:07867184047) / shirley.ricketts@brent.gov.uk or Natasha Thomson on [07825573021](tel:07825573021) / natasha.thomson@brent.gov.uk

Make 'n' bake corner

Slice-and-bake Valentine's biscuits



Keep the kids busy this Valentine's month with a delicious and easy to make biscuits that everyone will enjoy.

Ingredients:

300g plain flour, plus a little extra for dusting
200g salted butter, diced
120g golden caster sugar
2 large egg yolks
2 tsp vanilla extract
½ tsp rosewater, or 25g/1oz freeze-dried raspberries, whizzed to a powder
Red or pink food colouring

Preparation method:

1. Tip the flour and butter into a food processor and whizz to fine crumbs. Add the sugar and yolks then whizz to a smooth dough. Remove one-third of the dough, add vanilla to what's left and pulse to whizz in. Wrap this dough in cling film and leave at room temperature.
2. Put the reserved dough back in the processor with the rosewater or dried raspberries, if using, and a drop of food colouring. Pulse and add more colouring to achieve an intense colour. If the dough has become too soft, pulse in a few spoonfuls more flour until a similar consistency to the vanilla dough. Put the dough in the fridge, remembering to remove it 30

minutes before you need to roll it out.

3. Thickly roll out the coloured dough between baking parchment. Use a small 3-4cm heart cutter to stamp out hearts. Keep re-rolling and stamping until all the dough is used. Line up hearts on top of each other and press to form a cylinder, taking care to retain the heart shape. Wrap in cling film and freeze for 3 hrs until solid.

4. When the heart dough is hard, roll the vanilla dough, using your hands, into 3 cylinders the length of the heart stack. Stick one to each 'side' of the hearts, pat together to form a fat cylinder, then gently roll on your work surface until it completely encircles the coloured dough, with the frozen heart dough hidden in the centre. Chill for 2 hours.

5. Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. Use a sharp knife to slice the log into 1cm-thick discs. Place on trays lined with baking parchment, allowing space for spreading, and bake for 20 minutes. Cool on wire racks. Will keep for up to 4 days in an airtight container.

Recipe courtesy of <http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/slice-and-bake-valentines-biscuits>

Useful contacts

NHS Brent Sexual Health and Substance Misuse Service



At NHS Brent improving sexual health and providing effective substance misuse services are a huge priority.

We want to help you with any questions, worries or problems you may have by offering a range of services that provide personal advice and helpful pointers.

There are many highly trained professionals who are a visit or phone call away. Use our website to find out more about national and regional organisations that offer counselling whenever you need it.

<http://www.sexualhealthbrent.org.uk/>

Brent Local Safeguarding Children Board – launch online training



Brent LSCB is very pleased to announce the launch of their new E Learning zone. Here you will find a range of online courses and learning materials designed to meet your individual needs and priorities.

To get started visit:
<http://brentlscb.learningpool.com/>

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Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0FJ

020 8937 4538 / fostering@brent.gov.uk