

London Borough of Newham

Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2011/12



Contents

1. Introduction
2. Our vision for children and young people
3. Our objectives
4. Our principles and approach
5. Our staff
6. Our services
7. Better outcomes for our children
8. Comments and complaints
9. Review and inspection
10. Our contact details

1. Introduction

This Statement of Purpose explains our vision, objectives and services provided by Newham's Fostering Service. In doing so it sets out how the Service meets the requirement of Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011 together with Regulations relevant to the placement of children in foster care such as the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (the 2011 Regulations), which form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering services

The Fostering Service is part of the Children and Young People's Service and its primary role is to recruit, assess, train and support in-house foster carers.

This Statement of Purpose is updated regularly and reviewed by the Lead Member for Children's Services. It is available to staff, foster carers, children and young people, other professionals and the public upon request.

2. Our Vision for Children and Young People

Our vision as set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2010-14 is to ensure each one of our 75,000 children and young people has the capacity, skills, independence and resilience they will need to meet the challenges of adult life in the 21st century.

In support of this vision Newham's Children's Trust identified 3 key priorities where the partnership could work together to make a step change in outcomes for children and young people:

- *Children and young people are safe and feel safe;*
- *Children and young people are economically successful and achieve their aspirations;*
- *Children and young people are healthy and happy.*

Our commitment to the vision and priorities is crucial in relation to our looked after children as we are their corporate parent and the most important contribution we can make is finding them secure and suitable homes where they will thrive.

3. Our Objectives

The overarching aim of the Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality, appropriate foster placements that meet or exceed the standards and ensure the best possible outcomes for the looked after children of Newham.

We strive to not just meet but exceed the national minimum standards. We are committed to continuous improvement and want to maximise our achievements in the areas that make the most difference to children, young people and families.

Our primary objectives in support of this aim are to:

- a. Ensure the provision of secure, safe and consistent care to all children placed in foster care. **(NMS 4, 5 & 10)**
- b. Provide a positive experience of family life and a rich, enjoyable childhood to all children in foster care. **(NMS 1, 2 & 3)**
- c. Address the child's health, education and social development needs, and equip them with as good or better skills to achieve in their development as a child living in their birth home. **(NMS 6, 7 & 8)**
- d. Streamline recruitment and approval of foster carers to ensure that we are better able to meet the needs of our looked after children **(NMS 13, 14 & 15)**
- e. Working together with the child's social worker and the children looked after support project to develop and embed a continually improving understanding of the child's needs in a fostering setting throughout Safeguarding services **(NMS 16 & 17)**

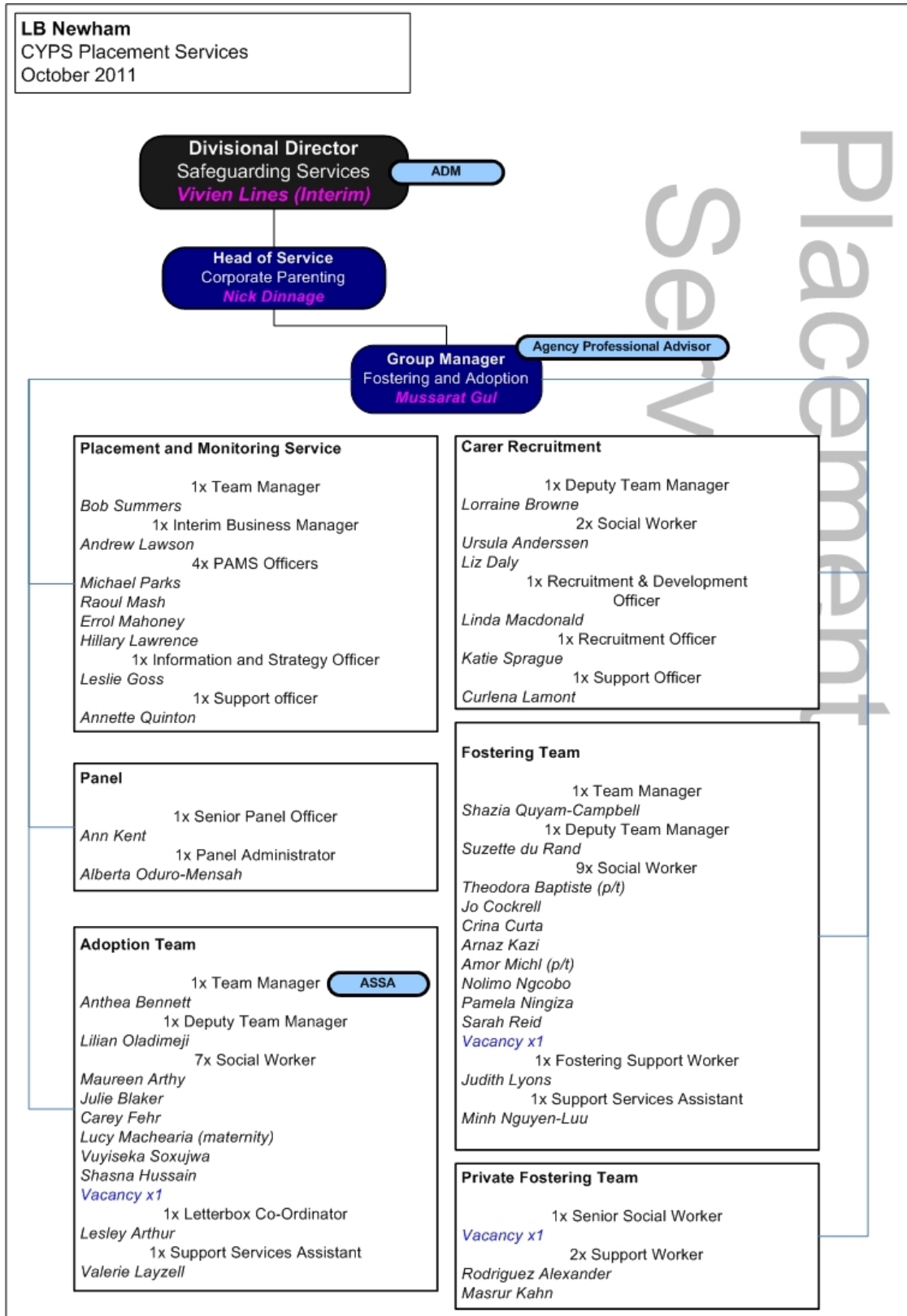
4. Our Principles and Approach

- ❖ Foster carers will only be recruited where we are certain they can provide a high standard of care and quality, loving environment for the child. We will proactively seek to reduce barriers to the best prospective carers becoming foster carers
- ❖ We will take into account the child's wishes and feelings whenever we consider a placement for the child. We will consult regularly to ensure we are taking the child's wishes and feelings into consideration
- ❖ Where it is possible and consistent with the child's best interest, we will try to place siblings together
- ❖ We always consider always, a child's age, gender, ethnicity, religion, culture sexuality, language, disability and any other characteristics when we are placing the child with foster carers
- ❖ We respect and protect the right to privacy for our children and their families including their feelings and wishes, their personal data and their right to pursue their own lives and develop successfully

- ❖ We ensure that whenever children and families come into contact with our service they interact with experienced, skilled members of staff and panel members who are capable of understanding their needs and making the right decisions on the child's behalf
- ❖ Foster carers and staff will be valued supported and provided with effective training to enable them to provide safe and effective care
- ❖ We will seek to support both children and carers in a Family and Friends fostering arrangement and give families caring for a young person who is a close friend or relative the best chance to continue caring for the child.
- ❖ We value our Family and Friends foster carers and will seek to provide an equal level of support as that we provide for our registered foster carers.
- ❖ We will commission services only where we are certain that our partners can provide a high quality and value for money service. We monitor our commissioned services closely to ensure they share our values and principles
- ❖ We will be strong advocates to raise the profile of fostering within Newham's communities to dispel any myths and preconceptions concerning fostering and to access families and individuals who may not otherwise have considered fostering to find out more
- ❖ Our service is monitored against a range of performance indicators and quality standards to ensure consistent and sustained improvement.

5. Our Staff

The structure chart below shows the staffing levels within the Fostering Service and Placements Services, as at October 2011.



The management team of the Fostering Service consists of:

Vivien Lines (Interim Divisional Director, Safeguarding) qualified as a social worker in 1991 with a BA (Hons) and a CQSW. She also gained a Diploma in Child Protection in 1995 and a Diploma in Management Studies in 2003. She has significant experience in a range of operational, strategic and senior management roles in children's services in local, regional and central government including as an assistant director with responsibility for children's social care and safeguarding as well as for partnerships, performance, strategy and commissioning.

Vivien has been seconded to the role of Interim Divisional Director for Safeguarding in the London Borough of Newham since May 2011. In this role she is responsible for the line management of children's social care, including safeguarding, services to looked after children, specialist provision for disabled children and young people and the youth offending service.

She is on secondment from her substantive post of London Regional Safeguarding Adviser, one of three posts created to provide support to London LAs and partners to bring about improvements in safeguarding arrangements across the capital. The pan London role involves adding additional senior management and leadership capacity to responding to issues from inspection, serious case reviews or local factors to develop and ensure safe and effective safeguarding practice for vulnerable children and children in care, as well as ongoing service improvement.

Nick Dinnage (Head of Corporate Parenting) is qualified as a social worker with BA (Hons) and CQSQ in 1987 and holds an MBA gained in 1999. Nick has worked in children and families services since qualifying in 1987. He has held various management positions since 1995. Nick joined the London Borough of Newham in 2000 and has held the positions of Senior Team Manager and Quadrant Manager. He has been in his current position since April 2010. Nick is a permanent employee.

Mussarat Gul (Group Manager, Placement Services) qualified in 1997 and holds a Diploma in Social Work. She also holds an MSc in Social Work, a DMS and MBA in public services. She has thirteen years experience in childcare and has been employed as a Group Manager of Placement Services since April 2010, prior to which she held the post of Senior Manager of the Adoption Team since 2007. She has been a panel member for both the fostering and adoption panels and is currently the Professional Advisor for the Fostering Panel. Mussarat is a permanent employee.

Shazia Qayum-Campbell (Team Manager, Fostering) qualified in 1996 with a Diploma in Higher Education and Social Work. Shazia has gained her extensive knowledge having worked in many London boroughs. Her fifteen years experience has included working in residential, child protection, hospital, leaving care and fostering teams. Shazia has been a panel chair for a fostering agency since 2009. She also has experience of working in fostering in the private and voluntary sector. Shazia is a permanent employee.

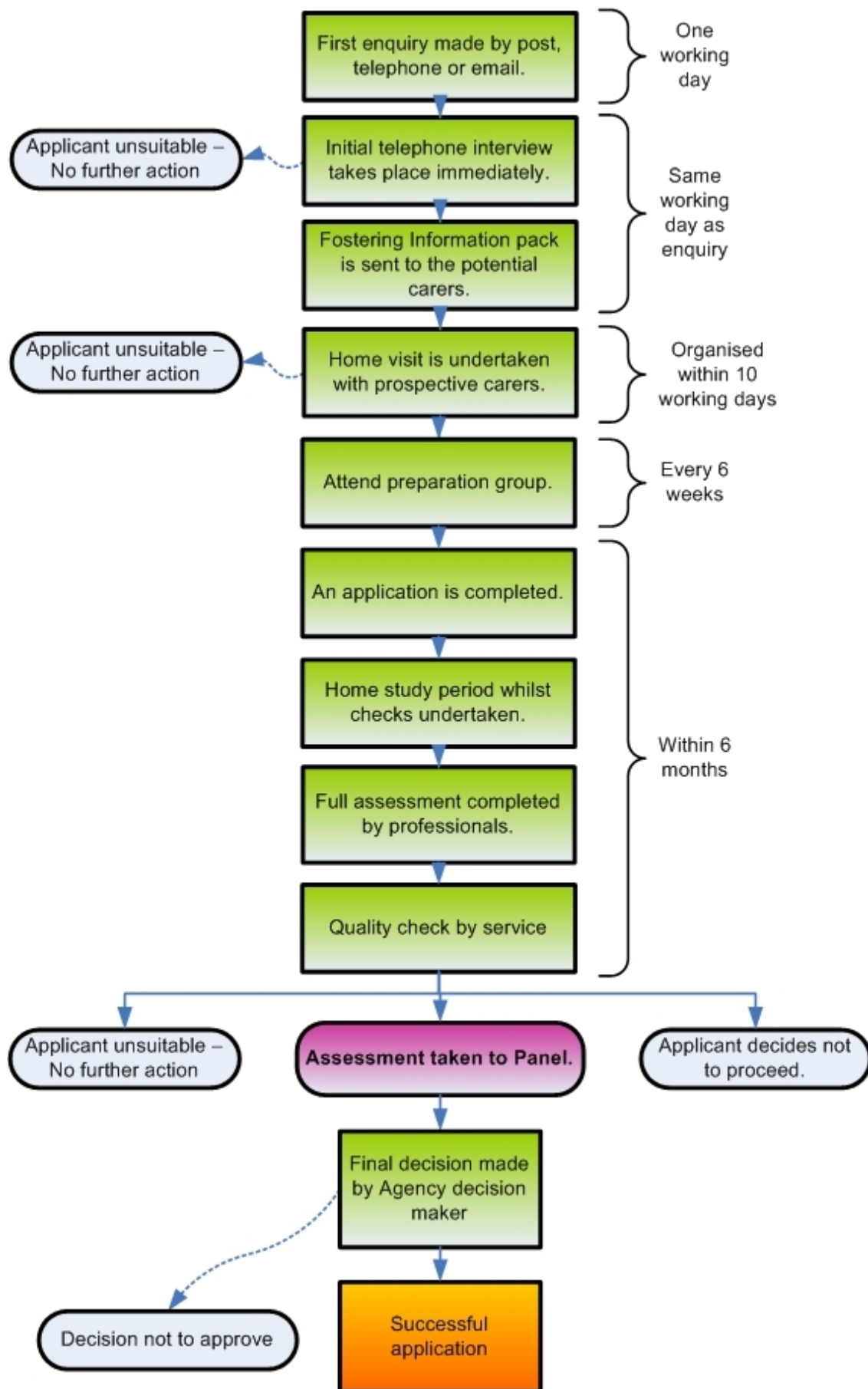
6. Our Services

Newham's Fostering Service provides the following

a. Recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers.

The Carer Recruitment Team works to a Recruitment and Retention Strategy that is updated bi-annually. The strategy recognises the need to recruit foster carers from within an agreed catchment area, in order to meet the very varied needs of the children requiring foster homes.

The assessment and approval process is as follows:



The Carer Recruitment Team is also responsible for the full assessment of Family and Friends foster carers following on from interim approval. Family and Friends foster carers (sometimes referred to in the new legislation as 'connected persons' foster carers) are approved to care for a specific child or sibling group, who they are related to or who are a close family friend. These placements often start during care proceedings and many such placements go on to become permanent arrangements through Residence, Special Guardianship or Adoption Orders.

b. Support and Supervision of Foster Carers and Family and Friends Foster Carers

Once a foster carer or Family and Friends foster carer has been approved by our panel, they will be allocated their own supervising social worker from whom they will receive regular supervision/support. Carers can access the Out of Hours Duty Team, who is on-call, providing advice from 5.15pm until 9.00am from Monday to Friday and throughout the weekend and bank holidays.

Bi-monthly support groups for all carers are held in the evening and during the day.

Any carer currently looking after a connected child may be assessed to be a Family and Friends foster carer whilst the child is still living with them. This is called an "interim arrangement" and must be recommended by the child's social worker following an initial viability assessment. Panel will approve any extensions to this arrangement as needed, but a full assessment of the child's current carers will be needed for us to authorise the child to remain in this placement.

Foster carers and Family and Friends foster carers will receive a weekly allowance to cover the costs of caring for the child in placement, and any carer unconnected to the child will also receive a weekly fee for themselves. The foster carer's weekly fee increases with the foster carer's development. A one-off set up grant is also given to all new carers to provide necessary furniture, bedding and other necessities for their future placements.

All carers are subject to an Annual Foster Home Review that looks at their fostering experience over the previous year including training attended and support provided. Views are sought from the supervising social worker, the foster carer, foster children, birth children, and placing social workers. Following the review the agency decision maker will consider whether it is necessary to continue with, change or terminate the carers' approval.

Every approved foster carer is reviewed at the first anniversary after their approval date and thereafter annually. The first and three yearly reviews are presented to the fostering panel for deliberation and recommendation, whilst the second review is not necessarily presented to the panel unless there are concerns about the carer's suitability or the quality or standard of care being provided. Otherwise such reviews are presented directly to the Divisional Director, Children and Young People's Service, who is the Agency Decision Maker, for re-approval.

c. Training for approved foster carers.

All approved foster carers are expected to undertake a range of training to update and develop their skills. The national standards developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council provide a framework for training for the first two years of a foster carer's service, and all Family and Friends carers are offered training against these competencies as well. The seven Standards cover the main areas of the foster care role and set out what foster carers should know, understand and be able to do:

- Standard 1:** understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people
- Standard 2:** understand your role as a Foster Carer
- Standard 3:** understand health and safety and healthy caring
- Standard 4:** know how to communicate effectively
- Standard 5:** understand the development of children and young people
- Standard 6:** safeguard children and young people (keep them safe from harm)
- Standard 7:** develop yourself.

Any Family and Friends foster carers who are approved by us are also able to access training with a particular focus on the skills needed to provide this type of care.

d. Fostering United Newham

Fostering United Newham is the independent foster carers group, run by and for all Newham in-house carers. All new foster carers automatically receive membership of Fostering United Newham. The group are regularly consulted on service development. Fostering United Newham is allocated their own budget to fund events throughout the year.

The Service also registers all foster carers, including Family and Friends foster carers, for membership of the Fostering Network.

e. **Information for connected carers**

If you would like more information about the range of options available for looking after a child whom you already know or are related to, you can find information about the various arrangements and what they mean for carers and children in Newham's Family and Friends Care Policy, published on the Newham website.

7. **Better outcomes for our children**

The "five outcomes" at the heart of children's services set out in the Children Act 2004, together with the Fostering National Minimum Standards (revised 2011), has formed the standards by which we measure the success of our adoption services.

- **Being healthy:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle. We support our foster children to be healthy by ensuring that the homes they will live in are safe and secure, and that the foster carers know how to provide medication and seek access to healthcare as necessary. We also have a medical advisor to our foster panel who makes sure that the children's health needs are able to be met by the foster carers.
- **Staying safe:** being protected from harm and neglect. We ensure our children stay safe by checking every potential foster carer carefully to make sure they can keep children safe. We also ensure that everyone working with the child is trained to ensure the child's safety and social workers keep closely in contact with children in case they have any concerns. Advice is always available to all of our looked after children and carers.
- **Enjoying and achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood. We believe in providing an environment in which our looked after children and their foster families can enjoy their time together and help the children to do well and achieve in education or in work. We make sure that prospective foster carers are able to provide everything the child needs to help them do well in school, and will often support families with extra teaching or equipment if necessary. Newham's Children Looked After Support Programme will work with our looked after children for as long as they need the extra help

- **Making a positive contribution:** being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour. We offer help to our children and young people to stay on a safe path and make sure that they have leisure and cultural opportunities and are allowed to decide things for themselves. Every child should be supported to make friends, and foster families are encouraged to provide this wherever possible
- **Achieving economic well-being:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life. We make sure that all the foster carers regularly place savings into an account for the child for their future. All children and young people who are in our care for longer than a year will have their own NewCred savings account which they can access once they reach eighteen.

8. Comments and Complaints

If a comment or complaint about the service is received, it is the responsibility of the Team Manager of the relevant team to try to put right any concerns raised by service users.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at this first stage, it may become necessary for the complaint to be formally registered with the

Customer Relations Team

London Borough of Newham
Newham Dockside
1000 Dockside Road
London E16 2QU.

Telephone: 020 3373 4461

Email: customerrelations.team@newham.gov.uk

A copy of the leaflet setting out how to make a complaint is made available to applicants during their assessment.

If a child or young person makes a complaint about services provided for them, then the Children Act complaints procedure is followed. All children and young people can access an advocate via the Children's Rights Service. The Children's Rights Service will support children and young people in making complaints on their behalf and support them throughout the process of getting a solution.

Their contact details are

Children's Rights Team

134 Church Road
Manor Park
London E12 6HL.

Telephone: 020 3373 2548

Freephone: 0800 0131650

Email: childrensrights@newham.gov.uk

9. Review and inspection

Applicants, who are seeking to become a foster carer and are turned down for approval on the decision of the Agency Decision Maker, are able to ask for their case to be reviewed by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). Details of this process with timescales, is made available to applicants during their assessment and is again enclosed with the Agency Decision Maker's letter, if not approved.

The IRM's contact details are as follows

Contract Manager

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

Unit 4, Pavilion Business Park
Royds Hall Road
Wortley
Leeds LS12 6AJ.

Telephone: 0870 034 6420

Fax: 0870 034 6421

Email: irm@baaf.org.uk

Website: www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk

Ofsted are responsible for the inspection of Newham Fostering Service. Significant incidents are reported to them.

The local Ofsted office responsible for inspecting our services is:

Ofsted South Region

Freshford House
Radcliffe Way
Bristol BF1 6NL

Telephone – 08456 404040

Email – enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

10. Our contact details

Newham Fostering Service relocated to new offices in June 2009.
Our new contact details are

Newham Fostering Service

London Borough of Newham
Newham Dockside
Second Floor, East Wing
1000 Dockside Road
London E16 2QU

Telephone: 020 8430 2000

Email: fosteringsupportteam@newham.gov.uk