

London Borough of Newham

Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2022/2023



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1. Introductions

This Statement of Purpose explains our vision, objectives and the service provided by Newham's Fostering service. In doing so it sets out how the Service meets the requirements of the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, and subsequent related guidance and legislation concerning looked after children and young people.

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 and Family and Friends/Connected Persons Carers. This statement of purpose is reviewed and updated annually.

2. Our vision for Children and Young People

Our vision is set out in the Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-23, agreed in January 2022.

The overall outcomes (co-produced with children in care), we are seeking to includes for children and young people the following

- Priority 1: Trusted and safe relationships
- Priority 2: Education, employment and training
- Priority 3: Opportunities growing up
- Priority 4: Identity
- Priority 5: Co-production
- Priority 6: Home and Housing
- Priority 7: Health and support
- Priority 8: Caring for those who care

To achieve these outcomes we ensure we are doing everything we can across the Council with our partners, to listen and respond to what is important for children and young people, bringing real improvements in the experience of their care and significantly contributing to enhancing their life chances.

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 Fostering National Minimum Standards (NMS). We continually strive to recruit and retain carers who are nurturing, have high aspirations for our looked after children and wish to work with us to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children in their care.

Our primary objectives in support of this aim are to:

- Ensure the provision of secure, safe and consistent care to all children placed in foster care (NMS 4, 5, 10 & 21).
- Provide a positive experience of family life and a rich, enjoyable childhood to all children in foster care (NMS 1, 2 & 3).
- To actively contribute and ensure permanency planning occurs in a timely manner for children and young people. Rehabilitation to birth parents, adoption, special guardianship, connected persons arrangements, long term fostering, independent living, staying put arrangements; step down from residential to foster care.
- Prioritise the child's health, education and social development in order to assist them in reaching their full potential.
- Place importance on recognising and helping children and young people to develop positive identities and high self-esteem by promoting their cultural heritage and traditions, religion and language whilst in foster care.
- Targeted recruitment and approval of foster carers to ensure that we are better able to meet the needs of our looked after children population.
- Working together with the child's social worker and multi-agency partners to develop and embed a continually improving understanding of the children and young people's needs in a fostering setting. Targeted training is offered to foster carers to address current social challenges such as knife crime, county lines, criminal and sexual exploitation, FGM.
- To work in partnership with children, young people, parents, foster carers and professionals to ensure the views of our looked after children are captured in consultation with the supervising social worker. Further contributions are acknowledged from both fostering practice leads who attend the Children in Care Council and during the foster carer Annual foster home reviews.
- Provide appropriate training and supervision to enable foster carers to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care and to assist in their own personal and professional development.
- Foster carers will continue to benefit from the support of the fostering team family therapist, an embedded clinician with the fostering service who provides training, case consultations and 1:1 Support for the foster carers through their supervising social worker.

4. Our principles and approach

- Foster carers will only be recruited where we are satisfied they can provide a high standard of care and loving environment for the foster child.
- We will consult regularly and consider the child's wishes and feelings when we plan a placement for the child in order to best meet their needs.
- Where it is possible and consistent with the child's best interests, we will try to place siblings together.
- We will continue to consider 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 will enable young people reaching eighteen years-of-age to remain living with their foster carer under a 'Staying Put' arrangement, if that is both theirs and their foster carers wish.
- 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 social workers 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 connected person's 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 connected person's 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 continue to advocate to raise the profile of fostering within Newham's communities to dispel any myths and misconceptions concerning fostering.

- Our service is monitored against a range of performance indicators and quality standards to ensure consistent and sustained improvement.

5. Our staff

The management team of the Fostering Service, as of 31st March 2022. Includes the following:-

Head of Corporate Parenting, Service Manager Placements and three Practice Leads.

One Practice Lead manages the Carer Recruitment Team, staff in that team are responsible for the recruitment and assessment of prospective Foster Carers including Connected Person's and Special Guardian Carers. In addition they are responsible for providing Post Order Support between Special Guardian Carers and Birth Families. The Carer Recruitment Team consists of 1 Recruitment Officer and 4 Social Workers.

The other two Practice Leads and Private Fostering Lead are responsible for the supervision and support of Foster Carers. The Fostering Team consists of 11 Supervising Social Workers.

The service is supported by officers in the Business Support Team which includes 1 Panel Administrator.

There is 1 independent fostering IRO that will be managed by the Quality Assurance service mid July 2022

6. Fostering Panel

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering (Standard 14) states: The fostering panel and decision maker make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations/decisions in line with the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care.

The Panel also has a quality assurance role and gives advice about permanency planning and highlights concerns regarding drift and delay.

Outstanding actions from previous fostering panel as well as exemptions are presented at the business section of each panel.

Foster carers and prospective foster carers are given the opportunity to attend and to contribute at panel meetings during which their approval/re-approval/matching is being discussed.

Membership of Panel

Recruitment of new members is either through advertising in the local media, website and intranet, through Consortium members or internal council processes. Applicants are interviewed by the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor. When a candidate is applying to become an independent panel member, one other panel member is involved in the interview process in addition to the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor. Recommendations on appointments are presented to the Agency Decision Maker for final approval. Once approved, the new member becomes part of the central list of members. There is no limit on the number of people who may be included on the central list.

The number, skills, knowledge and experience of persons on the central list continue to be sufficient to enable the fostering service to constitute panels that are equipped to make competent recommendations to the fostering service provider, taking into account the needs of the children and carers that the service provides for.

Panel Members Appraisals

There is a statutory requirement for an Annual Review of each panel member's performance as set out in the Adoption & Children Act 2002. These are conducted by the Agency Panel Advisor and the Panel Chair.

Appraisals for panel members are completed on an annual basis. The fostering panel chair provides feedback to the panel on the general outcomes from the appraisals. The Chair's annual appraisal is conducted by the Panel Advisor (Service Manager, Placements) and the Agency Decision Maker, the Head of Service.

From the year's appraisals, Panel Members were able to pass on comments about the panel meetings and processes as well as hear feedback about their own individual contributions. Panel members found this helpful and were able to contribute to the development of their own and the panel's development.

7. The Fostering Transformation Programme: 3 year development plan

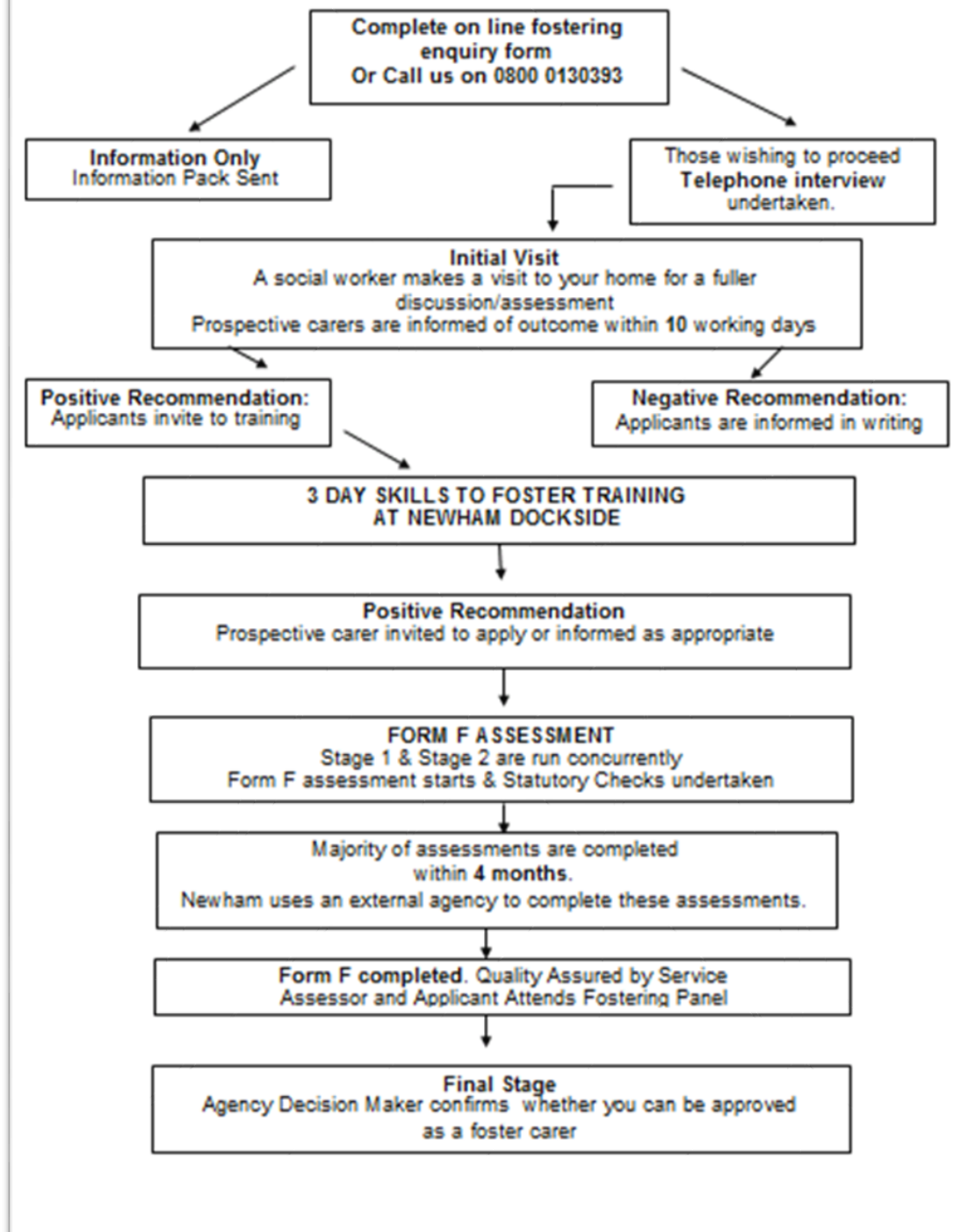
The Fostering Transformation Programme was launched at the start of this reporting period, it is an ambitious and comprehensive project focusing not only on modernising our social media /online marketing and recruitment strategy, but also corporate offer of allowances and incentives to foster carers including allowances and incentives and strengthening the training and support offer. This transformation agenda is managed through the work of the Transformation Board, whose membership includes a range of stakeholders including in-house foster carer representatives from the Fostering United Newham (FUN) Group. The 3 year development will ensure that there is an ongoing recruitment drive to recruit new foster carers to the service utilising all the resources available through social media marketing, as well as maintain our ability to promote word of mouth referrals through our relationships with foster carer support groups. Secondly as a further impetus on developing the skills and capacity of our fostering pool of foster carers in order to increase in house capacity with a service transformation review that will consider foster carers fees and other benefits.

8. Recruitment and Assessment of Foster Carers

The Carer Recruitment Team implements a Recruitment and Retention Strategy that is updated annually in line with the needs and profiles of Newham looked after children. The strategy recognises the need to recruit foster carers from within a targeted catchment area, in order to meet the needs of the children requiring foster placements.

Prospective foster carers will approach the service as a result of general advertising, website, recruitment events, or personal word of mouth recommendation.

Your Fostering Journey



9. Support and supervision of Foster Carers

Once a foster carer has been approved by the Agency Decision Maker, they will be allocated a supervising social worker from whom they will receive regular supervision and support. If a foster carer needs advice out of normal office hours, they can contact the Out of Hours Duty Team, who is on-call from 5.15pm until 9.00am from Monday to Friday and throughout the weekend and bank holidays.

All carers are invited to attend the monthly support groups which alternate between being held during the day and the evening.

Any carer currently looking after a connected child may be assessed to be a connected person 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. A full assessment of the child’s current carers will be needed for us to authorise the child to remain in this placement, which is then presented to the Fostering Panel.

A one-off set up grant of £750.00 is given to all new carers to provide furniture, bedding and other necessities for their future placements. Foster carers will receive a weekly allowance to cover the costs of caring for the child in placement and a weekly fee for themselves. The foster carer’s weekly fee increases with the foster carer’s development.

All carers are subject to an Annual Foster Home Review (AFHR) 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 Deputy Director, Children and Young People’s Service, who is the Agency Decision Maker, for re-approval.

Staying Put

All young people who are looked after and reaching 18 years of age will have the opportunity to remain with their current foster carer. This will be considered as a ‘Staying Put’ arrangement.

The young person may request to Stay Put because they:

- wish to continue their education
- feel too vulnerable to leave their foster placement at this stage
- are waiting for suitable housing
- feel settled and it’s their personal preference to remain with their foster carer.

The foster carer will need to be in agreement with the proposed Staying Put arrangement at least one year prior to the young person reaching their 18th birthday. Although Staying Put arrangements reduce the available pool of foster carers for young people, there are many benefits in terms of care leavers' outcomes for such arrangement to continue.

Fostering United Newham

Fostering United Newham is the independent foster carers support group, run by, and available to all Newham in-house carers. Fostering United Newham committee members and Fostering leads meet on a quarterly basis annually to discuss issues, ideas and challenges specific to the fostering role.

All new foster carers routinely receive membership of Fostering United Newham. The group are regularly consulted on service development and are allocated their own budget to fund events throughout the year.

The Service also registers all foster carers, including connected person's foster carers, for membership of Fostering Network. Fostering Network is an independent, non-profit organisation providing high quality professional support to foster carers in England.

Training and Development of 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 (Training, Support & Development Standards) provide a framework for training for the first twelve to eighteen months of a foster carer's (including connected persons) service. The seven Standards cover the main areas of the foster carer 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.

Experienced and newly approved foster carers are also encouraged to attend the Fostering Changes programme. This programme provides practical advice and training for foster carers in order to develop their skills in managing difficult and challenging behaviour and forming positive relationships with the children they are caring for.

The e-learning courses include but not limited to:

- Safeguarding and child protection
- Child development
- Attachment
- Grieve and bereavement
- Mental health
- Complex trauma

- Child development
- Working with children with disabilities
- Anti-bullying
- Contact and birth families
- Positive identity and self esteem
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Life story work
- Play therapy
- Health and nutrition
- Equality and diversity

10. 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: 0845 450 3956
 Fax: 0845 450 3957
 Email: irm@baaf.org.uk
 Website: www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk

Ofsted is responsible for the regulations and inspections of children social care services, including Local Authority Fostering Services. The national minimum standards are designed to set minimum acceptable standards for the safe running of fostering services. Details are available on their website:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

11. Our contact details

Newham Fostering Service contact details are

Newham Fostering Service

London Borough of Newham

Newham Dockside

Second Floor, West Wing

1000 Dockside Road

London E16 2QU

Telephone: 020 8430 2000

Email: fosteringsupportteam@newham.gov.uk
