



Newham

Looked After Children Placement Sufficiency Strategy

2016-2019

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1 Introduction

This strategy sets out how Newham will provide and commission placements for Looked After Children that best meet their needs and delivers the Newham Children and Young People Plan vision for every child in Newham.

It will cover the period 2016 -2019 and will complement the Edge of Care Strategy and the Recruitment Strategy (for foster carers and adopters). All three documents will feed into and inform the overarching strategy for looked after children.

The placements identified will include:

- Friends and family foster carers
- In house foster carers
- Residential accommodation including residential schools
- 16 plus accommodation and support
- Emergency placements (which could be any of the above)

The strategy is informed by the findings and analysis of need and by what children looked after and care leavers have told us.

National drivers

Section 22G of The Children Act 1989 requires councils to provide, as far is reasonably practicable, accommodation for looked after children in their local area which meets the needs of those children. Councils need to consider their strategy for securing the range of accommodation capable of meeting different needs.

This requirement is informed by research that has identified that local placements generally produce better outcomes for children looked after whether provided by the local authority or the voluntary or private sector. The exception is where there is a need for a specialist placement or for a child to be placed outside of their authority.

Local drivers

The overarching vision for looked after children in Newham is the same as the vision for all Newham children

To ensure that each one of our 85,000 children and young people has the skills, health and resilience to meet the challenges of adult life in the 21st century

Newham has a duty to support the resilience of families through effective early help and reduce the need for children to be looked after. However, where it is in their best interests to be looked after, children will be accommodated in appropriate accommodation and support to meet their needs.

The challenge for Newham is to expand placement capacity to provide sufficient accommodation locally. Our aim is for Newham services to be in line with the best performing local authorities by 2019.

2 Principles and vision

The vision of this placement sufficiency strategy is to ensure that we deliver:

**the best placement
at the right time
for the most competitive price**

The key strategic principles are that:

- Placements are based on best value and evidence of outcomes being delivered
- The commissioning priorities are based on the findings of the sufficiency needs analysis
- We work in partnership with other authorities and the market to maximise shared resources and maximise economies of scale.
- We listen to children and young people and maximise opportunities for their feedback to inform and influence service delivery.
- We provide young people with some choice about whether they live
- We secure the best possible placement for every child and young person, with consistent application of processes and standards across internal and external provision.
- We implement robust commissioning, contract and quality assurance processes and ensure that the same levels of monitoring and quality standards are applied for placements more than 20 miles from Newham.
- We are clear (to providers) what excellent outcomes look like for each child and young person and explore incentives for achieving these

3 Outcomes to be delivered

Evidence of outcomes being achieved and cost effectiveness. Measure children and young people's outcomes using a standardised approach across all placements ensuring an understanding of what does and does not work and acknowledging when something needs to change.

Placements are stable

Increase the number of local placements Increase in the proportion of placements in Newham and within 20 miles of Newham

More placements for older, challenging and disabled children and young people - Increase in the number and proportion of teenagers, disabled young people and those placed with in house foster carers

Young people are prepared for transition to a family environment or adulthood with the resilience, skills and abilities to thrive and a diminishing need for services.

4 Market Development

Newham Council operates within a mixed economy of internal and external provision. Choice and diversity is maintained by placements being commissioned through framework, spot and block purchasing arrangements, some of which are regional. To effectively shape the market, Newham Council will maintain a strong visible presence and consult directly with the market, articulating a clear direction for what is required internally and externally to best meet the needs of our children and young people.

The market must be;

- Composed of the optimum number, sector and size of providers. A mix of small, medium and large organisations from the public, private, voluntary and not for profit sectors, to achieve variety, sustainability and avoid monopolies
- Dynamic, flexible and responsive - proactively adapting to changing demand and need
- Person-centred and outcomes-focused
- Efficient, effective and value for money

Securing a local placement will support maintaining a young person's educational, health, social and cultural connections and access to resources.

Newham Council will strive to secure the most appropriate placement available for each child and young person. Where appropriate, the priority will be for all children and young people to remain living locally. This will be achieved through short, medium and long term strategies to maximise local provision availability.

Where it is not possible to secure a local placement, the remaining matching criteria for a young person will be prioritised and the Brokerage Team will evidence that it has done all that is reasonably practicable to secure a suitable placement. Children are placed with foster carers from independent fostering agencies because a suitable match could not be found with in house carers or was not available at the time the placement was required.

Newham Council will collaborate with providers and with regional local authorities to ensure that the use of local placements for local children and young people is maximised. In the short term, this will include improved co-ordination and advanced placement planning. In the medium to long term this will include block contract arrangements and plans for increased local placement capacity. Newham Council aims to use providers that are judged by Ofsted as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

5 Current provision

In house fostering service

Newham currently has 105 in house foster carer households (December 2015) offering a maximum of 152 placements (including additional places where the children are siblings). The average occupancy rate for in house foster carers in Newham is 70 per cent.

Independent fostering agencies (IFAs)

Newham is part of a three year (2014-2017) framework agreement for placements with independent fostering agencies. The framework was commissioned across ten east and north London local authorities and there are 49 agencies on the framework.

Residential homes

Newham has no residential homes for looked after children. There is a short breaks residential home for children with disabilities. Newham currently purchase all residential placements from London Council's 'London Care' approved providers. The rates paid are negotiated annually through London Councils for all London boroughs. However there is no central co-ordination of the monitoring resulting in duplication for providers and local authorities.

Care leavers accommodation and support

Newham Council currently has a block contract of 80 units of low support semi-independent provision for care leavers. This contract expires in November 2016. Outside of this contract, accommodation with medium and high levels of support is spot purchased from independent providers.

There are two in house foster carers with 'staying put' arrangements places (December 201). There are no other supported lodgings placements.

Newham support services for looked after children

Support services for looked after children include:

- Three part time CAMHS Clinicians attached to the social care teams
- CAMHS service for looked after children
- Children Looked After Support Project (CLASP)
- Emergency Duty team for out of hours support

6 Commissioning priorities identified by the sufficiency needs assessment

The findings of the analysis of need have identified the following eight priorities.

1. Increase the number of in house foster carer placements to enable more children to be placed in and around Newham including for disabled children, older looked after children and for emergency placements
2. Increase use of friends and family foster carers
3. Increase support to in house foster carers including out of hours support and cluster schemes where they can support each other
4. Improve the process for ensuring the views of the young people inform placement choice and so minimise breakdown of placements
5. Increase residential placement choice by working with local providers to improve the quality of provision and negotiate preferential rates
6. Reduce costs and ensure value for money through use of framework contracts and minimising the use of spot purchasing

7. Work with neighbouring local authorities to achieve greater regional and sub-regional collaboration and economies of scale.
8. Improve matching process and tracking of needs and outcomes

The subsequent sections will detail the findings, good practice from national policy and research and the actions to be delivered within each priority. The full needs analysis is available from the Commissioning and Brokerage Service.

PRIORITY 1: Increase the number of in house foster carer placements to enable more children to be placed in and around Newham including for disabled children and for emergency placements

Newham has increased the number of in house foster carers from x to 105 but recruitment continues to be a challenge due in part to the national shortage foster carers including across London. Despite the increase in the number of in house foster carers, there continue to be a need for foster carers able to offer sibling placements, placements for older children, children with complex needs and disabilities and for emergency placements.

68% of foster care placements nationally (2015) are with in house foster carers. In Newham, 47% of all foster care placements in 2014-2015, were with our in house foster carers. The aim is to achieve a target of 70 per cent of our foster care placements with our in house service.

66 of our in house foster carers live in Newham. However there are also 21 foster carers based in Newham that work for other local authorities or fostering agencies. This suggests Newham could do more to increase our current number of in house foster carers. Of the 20 wards in Newham, two have no foster carers: the maximum number of our foster carers in any one ward is six. Ward based recruitment strategies in partnership with elected members is a way forward.

It is estimated to cost £11,500¹ to recruit a foster carer. This is a waste of resource if the foster carers do not match the needs or profile of current or future children needing foster care placements especially if it results in these being left without a placement.

Nationally on average, local authorities²:

- Generate 0.7 enquiries per looked after child needing foster care.
- Convert 11 per cent of enquiries to approved foster carers.
- Utilise 69 per cent of their foster carers.
- Take 9.2 months to process enquiries through to approval.
- Lose 13 per cent of the workforce each year.

¹ The Cost of Foster Care Report

² Local Authority Fostering Service Benchmark 2012/13

These statistics provide a benchmark against which to target recruitment activity.

Additional benefits provided by other local authorities include discounted council tax, free leisure passes and free parking. Kirklees Council successfully leafleted football matches for potential new foster carers. This could be replicated in Newham to target under represented white British foster carers.

Actions to achieve this priority

- Evaluate Newham recruitment performance against the national benchmarks to identify good practice and areas for investment to improve both recruitment and the retention of foster carers
- Set a net target of 20 new in house foster carers rather 20 gross particularly for placements for :
 - sibling groups
 - older children
 - children with disabilities
 - children with challenging behaviour
 - Emergency placements
- Recruit two respite foster carers for disabled children
- Work through Community Neighbourhoods to promote and recruit foster carers
- Work with the Cabinet Member, Children's Safeguarding to recruit foster carers through her Conversation Café events

PRIORITY 2 : Increase the use of friends and family foster carers

11 per cent of foster care placements nationally are with friends and family foster carers (2015). This compares with 6 per cent in Newham (2014-2015) where the number of placements with friends and family has declined over the last five years.

Children placed with friends and family are more likely to have stable long term placements. Nationally 20 percent of children placed with friend and family have been in placements for more than five years compared to 11 per cent for those with other foster carers (DFE, Improving Permanence Data Pack 2013).

Action to achieve this priority

Social workers evidence in each placement referral that they have investigated friends and family placements.

Monitor and report that social workers are evidencing that friends and family placements have been investigated

PRIORITY 3: Increase support to in house foster carers including out of hours support and cluster schemes where they can support each other

The only out of hours support to our in house foster carers is the Emergency Duty Team. During office hours, supervising social workers are supported by CAMHS clinicians. However due to the limited resource, the clinicians do not work directly with families unless there is a crisis or the possibility of a breakdown of the placement.

Some Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) offer a range of support to their foster carers such as systemic therapists working for six weeks directly with families for each new placement to ensure the child settles well and to develop communication and deal with the feelings of other family members (foster and birth). 'Outstanding' local authorities have an exceptionally wide range of services including 'foster plus, respite and step down services.

An award winning and innovative model of foster care that creates community and where foster carers support each other is the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM). In every MFM Constellation, six to ten families live in close proximity to a licensed foster care family – a Hub Home – that assists in navigating bureaucracy and offers peer support, social activities and respite care. This model is currently used by neighbouring Tower Hamlets and Greenwich Councils.

Actions to achieve this priority

- Investigate the potential for models of delivery such as the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) to enhance the in house fostering provision
- Develop in house foster care resource including family based short breaks where there is a pool of skilled carers who are able to provide short term placements which, if required, can be extended.
- Negotiate additional benefits and incentives for Newham in house foster carers such as free borough wide parking and council tax discounts to make working for Newham more attractive to potential foster carers.
- Work with partner agencies to improve the availability of support services for children and young people with behaviour difficulties

PRIORITY 4: Improve the process for ensuring the views of the young people inform placement choice and so minimise breakdown of placements

Placement stability is improving in Newham. The proportion of looked after children having three or more placements over a 12 month period has generally improved over the last six years from 17 per cent to 13 per cent although it is still below that of our statistical neighbours and the England average.

The percentage of looked after children in placements of two or more years has improved over the last six years from 59 per cent to 67 per cent and Newham

performance is better than that of our statistical neighbours but below the England average

Action to achieve this priority

- Ensure that brokerage officers are invited to and attend all Placement in Difficulty meetings for looked after children.
- Children in Care Council (CICC) volunteers are supported to participate in the tender for 16 plus accommodation and support
- Incorporate the feedback from the CICC members into the specification for the 16 plus accommodation and support

PRIORITY 5: increase residential placement choice by working with local providers to improve the quality of provision and negotiate preferential rates

There are 26 placements in total across the five children's homes in Newham. There are currently three Newham looked after children placed in these homes. Three of the five homes are currently rated by Ofsted as 'good'. Many of our children in residential homes are placed outside of Newham for safeguarding reasons. The default practice in Newham is for placements to be initially sourced from house foster carers, followed by independent fostering agencies with residential provision as a last resort where this is in the child's best interests.

There are a number of categories of young people for whom referrals request placements of great distance from Newham. These young people are:

- At risk of sexual exploitation.
- Go missing
- Associated with gangs or youth offending
- Young people exhibiting sexually harmful behaviour.

Our aim is to ensure that the needs of children placed further away from Newham are prioritised and that their ability to access and receive good quality services and support is not compromised by the location of their placement.

Research suggests that some children may achieve better outcomes by being placed immediately in a residential setting. The challenge is how to accurately identify these children. One way of identifying these children would be to carry out a longitudinal study of the impact of the residential care provision on different subgroups of children and young people(OPM, 2013).

Actions to achieve this priority

- Work in partnership with the five local residential home providers to improve the quality of provision and increase the local options available at affordable prices

- Improve the way that risk is defined and managed to ensure that more young people can be placed locally with a move way from distance being the risk management tool.
- Work with CAMHS colleagues to agree a clear list of evidence based requirements that can be matched with individual placement providers rather than a focus on 'what a placement can offer' to a child.

PRIORITY 6:

Achieve value for money through use of framework contracts and minimising use of spot purchasing

Placement Unit Costs

Being placed in Newham means that our looked after children benefit from the good schools and other universal services. In addition, there is value for money if a child is placed with in house foster carers rather than an IFA foster carer.

The unit cost of in house foster care placements is 54 per cent of the average unit cost of our IFA foster carers. Residential provision is almost ten times the unit cost of our in house foster carers. The challenge is to recruit more in house foster carers and equip them to be able to support older and more challenging young people.

Table 1: Unit cost: gross cost per child per week, 2015-2016³

Year	Newham	CIPFA Average
In house Fostering ⁴	£472	£467
IFA foster care	£884	£887
Residential homes	£3,510	£3,400

Based on the actual placements and spend in 2014-2015, an increase of 10 per cent in the number of placements with our in house foster carers and a equal reduction in the use of IFAs, would result in annual savings of over £490,000. (tables 2 and 3)

Table 2: Actual number and cost of in house and IFA foster care placements

Year	Number of placements (2014-2015)	Actual cost (2014-2015)
In house Fostering	335	£2,412,026
IFA foster care	327	£7,096,691
Total	662	£9,508,717

³ CIPFA Benchmarking Club 2015

⁴ Including overheads and fostering team costs

Table 3: Increase of 10 per cent in in house placements

Year	Number of placements (2014-2015)	Equivalent annual cost
In house Fostering	369	£2,656,829
IFA foster care	293	£6,358,809
Total	662	£9,015,638

Further more, some authorities make use of the Assisted Boarding Network to enable looked after children who meet the criteria to attend boarding school.

Savings Targets

As part of the 2020 programme to improve services delivery and outcomes for our residents, the provision of accommodation and placements will need to be scrutinised and savings made. This is, however, very sensitive to the high costs associated with a very small numbers of complex placements.

Actions to achieve this priority

- Review the unit costing calculations for the in house fostering service to ensure that it is comprehensive.
- Investigate opportunities for looked after children attending boarding schools through the Assisted Boarding Network rather than being accommodated by Newham.
- Improve the quality of referrals so they are based on need and outcomes to deliver effective packages of care without always incurring unnecessary additional costs for 'extras'.
- Increase the range and choice of provision for young people and care leavers through tendering for accommodation and support for young people aged 16 and over
- Research best practice and options for developing 'supported lodgings' provision for 16 to 18 year olds and care leavers
- Negotiate rates with providers based on time limited outcomes to be delivered
- Investigate scheme to incentivise providers to achieve excellent outcomes for our child/young person
- Work with neighbouring authorities to define and if appropriate, jointly commission the most appropriate placement model for young people at risk of CSE, gangs and other challenging needs

PRIORITY 7: Work with neighbouring local authorities to achieve greater regional and sub-regional collaboration and economies of scale.

The benefit of the three year framework for foster carers is that the rates agreed are on average 3 per cent lower than the Pan London rates. In addition the quality assurance and monitoring of the 49 providers is shared across the participating authorities.

Newham uses the Pan-London placements framework for residential placements. We pay an annual administrative fee to the London Borough of Harrow to cover running costs. However, the monitoring of providers is not shared and there is a duplication of approaches for contract management and monitoring arrangements. Increasing the quality and supply of local children's homes with neighbouring authorities is a key priority.

Actions to achieve this priority

- Work with neighbouring authorities to define and jointly commission the most appropriate placement model for young people at risk of CSE, gangs and other challenging needs
- Work with the North London Strategic Alliance and East London Solutions to increase the availability of foster carers able to support teenagers and young people with high level complex needs

PRIORITY 8: Improve the matching process and tracking of needs and outcomes

Better matching of needs with supply should reduce placement breakdown and is an area for development in most local authorities. A better understanding of the services available in the children's residential home market and of 'specialist' and 'therapeutic' placements and what works and for whom is required.

Actions to achieve this priority

- Ensure Brokerage officers are invited to all Placement Disruption meetings and collate the learning to inform future placement matching
- Capture learning from placement breakdowns and use to analyse and inform future matching and service planning
- Review the impact of new therapy provision in social care teams

7 Monitoring of this strategy

This strategy runs until 2019, and will remain under on-going review, including a review at least annually by the Corporate Parenting Board.

Action Plan for 2016- 2017

Priority	We will	Lead Officer	Timescale
1. Increase the number of in house foster carer placements to enable more children to be placed in and around Newham including for disabled children and for emergency placements	Evaluate Newham recruitment performance against the national benchmarks to identify good practice and areas for investment to improve both recruitment and the retention of foster carers	Service Manager Fostering and Adoption service	October 2016
	Set a net target of 20 new in house foster carers rather 20 gross particularly for placements for : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sibling groups • older children • children with disabilities • children with challenging behaviour • Emergency placements 	Service Manager Fostering and Adoption service	May 2017
	Recruit two respite foster carers for disabled children	Service Manager Fostering and Adoption service	March 2017
	Work through Community Neighbourhoods to promote and recruit foster carers	Service Manager Fostering and Adoption service	March 2017
	Work with the Cabinet Member, Children's Safeguarding to recruit foster carers through her Conversation Café events	Service Manager Fostering and Adoption service	March 2017
2. Increase use of friends and family foster carers	Social workers evidence in each placement referral that they have investigated friends and family placements.	Service Manager Looked After Children and Care Leavers Neighbourhood Managers	Ongoing
	Analysis evidence from referrals that social workers are evidencing that friends and family placements have been investigated	Service Commissioning and Brokerage	October 2016 March 2017

Priority	We will	Lead Officer	Timescale
3. Increase support to in house foster carers including out of hours support and cluster schemes where they can support each other	Investigate the potential for models of delivery such as the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) to enhance the in house fostering provision	Service Manager Fostering and Adoption service	December 2016
	Develop in house foster care resource including family based short breaks where there is a pool of skilled carers who are able to provide short term placements which, if required, can be extended.	Service Manager Fostering and Adoption service	March 2017
	Negotiate additional benefits and incentives for Newham in house foster carers such as free borough wide parking and council tax discounts to make working for Newham more attractive to potential foster carers.	Deputy Director Children's Social Care and Safeguarding	July 2017
	Work with partner agencies to improve the availability of support services for children and young people with behaviour difficulties	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	October 2016
4. Improve the process for ensuring the views of the young people inform placement choice and so minimise breakdown of placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Brokerage Officers are invited and attend 'placement in difficulty' meetings' (pre- disruption meetings) 	Service Manager Looked After Children and Care Leavers Neighbourhood Managers Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	June 2016 and ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in Care Council (CICC) volunteers are supported to participate in the tender for 16 plus accommodation and support 	Children's Rights Manager Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	August 2017
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate the feedback from the CICC members into the specification for the 16 plus accommodation and support 	Service Manager Commissioning and	July 2017

Priority	We will	Lead Officer	Timescale
		Brokerage	
5. Increase residential placement choice by working with local providers to improve the quality of provision and negotiate preferential rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership with the five local residential home providers to improve the quality of provision and increase the local options available at affordable prices 	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	March 2017
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the way that risk is defined and managed to ensure that more young people can be placed locally with a move away from distance being the risk management tool. 	Service Manager Looked After Children and Care Leavers Integrated Neighbourhood Managers	December 2016
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with CAMHS colleagues to agree a clear list of evidence based requirements that can be matched with individual placement providers. This would move from referrals asking 'what a placement can offer' to a child. 	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	December 2016
	Implement the quality assurance framework for providers for effective monitoring of contracts	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	October 2016
6. Achieve value for money through use of framework contracts and minimising the use of spot purchasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the unit costing calculations for the in house fostering service to ensure that it is comprehensive. 	Business Development Manager	September 2016
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for looked after children attending boarding schools through the Assisted Boarding Network rather than being accommodated by Newham. 	Service Manager Looked After Children Virtual Head Teacher	September 2016 and ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the range and choice of provision for young people and care leavers through tendering for accommodation and support for young people aged 16 and over 	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	October 2017
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the quality of referrals so they are based on need and outcomes to deliver effective packages of care without 	Service Manager Commissioning and	December 2016

Priority	We will	Lead Officer	Timescale
	always incurring unnecessary additional costs for 'extras'.	Brokerage	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and options for developing 'supported lodgings' provision for 16 to 18 year olds and care leavers 	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	October 2016
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate rates with providers based on time limited outcomes to be delivered 	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	Ongoing
	Investigate schemes to incentivise providers to achieve excellent outcomes for our child/young person	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	December 2016
7. Work with neighbouring local authorities to achieve greater regional and sub-regional collaboration and economies of scale.	Analyse data on vulnerable children and young people including those with Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Missing, home educated, Special Educational Needs	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	November 2016
	Work with neighbouring authorities to define and jointly commission the most appropriate placement model for young people at risk of CSE, gangs and other challenging needs	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	March 2017
	Work with the North London Strategic Alliance and East London Solutions to increase the availability of foster carers able to support teenagers and young people with high level complex needs	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	March 2017
8. Improve matching process and tracking of needs and outcomes	Collate learning from placement breakdowns to inform future matching (monthly)	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	March 2017
	Analyse referrals and matching criteria of placements to ensure good level of matching		
	Investigate use of Outcomes Star Framework by social workers for tracking individual placement outcomes	Service Manager LAC and Care Leavers	October 2016

Priority	We will	Lead Officer	Timescale
	<p>Develop a protocol to address what action should be undertaken when a provider receives an 'Inadequate' Ofsted judgement including increased monitoring visits and close liaison with the provider and Social Care. This protocol will also address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a provider receiving an 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted judgement • concerns around a providers' financial viability • decline in provider quality • spot purchasing of a non-vetted provider • managing a placement contract 	Service Manager Commissioning and Brokerage	March 2017