

Fostering Recruitment Strategy 2020-2023



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August 2020



1.Introduction

The Our Children, Our Future plan sets out how we want to provide outstanding services for the 67,900 children who call Lambeth their home. Our plan sets out how we intend to bring together all our energy, enthusiasm and resource across the public sector to deliver this ambition.

We are passionate in providing outstanding services, for all our children and young people who come into our care. Lambeth's ambition for all our foster children is high and our Fostering Recruitment Strategy (2020-2023) sets out our approach to meet that ambition. This document outlines how we intend to recruit and retain foster carers for the next three years (2020-2023). This strategy also describes the support we will provide to help improve outcomes for our children and young people in our fostering service.

This Strategy forms a range of connected plans and approaches, to provide joined up services that meet the needs of Lambeth's Children. The Strategy is aligned to our new Children Looked After and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy which has been co-produced across the Lambeth Together partnership. This Strategy seeks to provide the context and approach to attracting and retaining foster carers to deliver high quality placements that meet our needs.

2.Key Objectives for Fostering Recruitment in Lambeth

We have developed five key objectives in our Fostering Recruitment Strategy for the next three years that will form the focus of our activity. These are based on the needs of children in Lambeth that are outlined in our Sufficiency Strategy.

There are clear benefits with placing our children with in-house foster carers due to the proximity of children to their community, schools and families. We intend to build on the foundations we have and enhance our in-house services through 5 core objectives.

Objective 1 - To increase the number of in-house foster carers in Lambeth

We want to provide more in-house foster carers to support our children reach their potential here in Lambeth. Research shows that this approach not only improves outcomes for children but provides greater stability in a child's education and connections to friends and birth families. We want to recruit 20 new foster carers each year over the next three years.

Objective 2 - To develop a wraparound support model for Foster Carers

Lambeth is committed to supporting our foster carers. We want to provide them with the support and training they need to allow our children to thrive. We want to do this by creating a supportive environment for foster carers through formal and informal networks.

We also will develop a new support structure that includes health and social care support services to enable foster carers to provide the nurturing environments for our children and young people.

Objective 3- To reduce the number of Independent Foster Carer Agencies placements (IFA)

We want to reduce our reliance on agency placements and provide in house placements where we possible using our new model. Over the next two years we want to reduce our use of IFA's by 25% redirecting these to our new service. In addition, we will be re-launching our IFA Transfer scheme by matching the allowances being paid by IFA's to our new inhouse model in the first year of their transfer.

Objective 4- To create specialist foster care placements to support children to step down into inhouse foster placements and improve staying put arrangements

We want to create stable and nurturing placements for children who come from a variety of backgrounds who's needs are currently met through other placement types. We will create more in-house placement opportunities for parent and child placements, sibling groups and children with additional needs.

We want to further promote staying put arrangements in Lambeth and encourage where it is a young person's interests to stay with their foster carers up until the age of 25 where needed.

Objective 5- To improve our marketing approaches to reach out to Prospective Foster Carers

We will take a holistic approach to our marketing approaches and capabilities. We will proactively use new and more dynamic ways attract passionate and caring foster carers to support children and young people in Lambeth.

3.Looked After Children Analysis

Between 2010 and 2020, Lambeth has experienced a gradual decline in the number of children looked after.

Between 2015 and 2020, we have seen a 25% reduction in our care numbers across the Borough. As of September 2020 Lambeth had 374 children in care. These reductions are in contrast with national figures and our statistical neighbours, but in line with inner London and our geographical neighbours.

We believe that this this trajectory is due to our positive practice model, our careful scrutiny of children that are on the edge of care, and careful review of children that have returned to care.

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 ¹
500	510	500	529	483	460	414	411	353	359-374

We have reviewed the likely numbers of children who may need fostering placements across the borough to help inform our strategy. Over the next 3 years, we project that we that between 350

¹ Statistical data in 2020 shows current spread of children who are looked after

and 400 children will be looked after. Lambeth will need to provide appropriate placements for our children through our in-house fostering service to support the meeting of this need.

Most of the children placed with our in-house foster carers are over the age of five. The majority have entered care as a result of abuse and neglect, potentially requiring high levels of support depending on their level of trauma.

We find placements for 80% of our children within 20 miles of their home. We currently find placements for 24% of our children within Lambeth. 31% of our children are placed in neighbouring London Boroughs with 20% of our children being accommodated in other parts of London. Currently in 2020, 22% of our children who are looked after are placed outside of London.

We hope to be able to meet the needs of 75% of all our children through foster care placements in our Borough by 2023. Currently, we provide placements for 26% of our children through our in-house foster care service. We want to see a substantial increase in the numbers of foster carers over the next three years to meet this objective.

Currently, the majority of our children are placed in other types of placements as indicated in the table below. In Lambeth, we have a large number of children accessing placements through IFA placements.

The costs of providing these placements is substantially higher than the costs of our in-house foster carers. The in-house foster care team oversee high quality placements which focus on meeting the needs of our children. Our Social Workers also have close relationships with our Foster Carers which we wish to develop these relationships over the next three years.

We hope to be able to step down several of our Residential placements and IFA placements into our in-house service. There are also a number of gaps in terms of the capabilities that our current service provides. Currently, we are not able to provide parent and child and some specialist therapeutic placements.

We know from our sufficiency review, that there is a demand for parent and child placements. We wish to create capacity for these types of placements moving forward. Currently, these placements are accommodated by external IFA placements which is something we wish to provide through our in-house service in future.

We also have a high demand for therapeutic placements which currently are not provided by our in-house team and are provided through residential and IFA placements. Moving forward we need to provide additional placements in-house that support those areas and give us greater flexibility to meet this need through alternative routes.

In future, we hope to see that the majority of our placements are met through our in-house capacity and not externally funded agency placements. Where the needs of children can be met through a therapeutic offer, we wish to divert children from residential placements towards our in-house services.

4. Foster Carer Cohorts and Enquiries

In Lambeth currently, we have 84 households registered to provide in house foster carer placements across the Borough. Currently, we currently can provide up to 116 placements to support children and young people through our in-house fostering service.

Currently, our foster carers provide, a range of short term and long-term placement types. These include, caring for sibling groups and children who are unaccompanied.

In Lambeth, we wish to continue to retain a diverse in-house foster carer network with differing backgrounds and experiences to meet the needs of our children in care. The breakdown of our current carers is shown in the diagram below.

We have over the last 12 months seen 6 households registered in the borough to provide in house foster care placements. The number of households who de-registered since the publication of the last strategy is 9% of our overall total and work is required to reverse this trend. We know that the market requires an overall offer which is attractive to carers to meet the objectives that we have set out.

Collection Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Households	99	93	95	84
Placement Capacity	144	142	136	116

Lambeth has a proactive programme of sourcing enquiries for potential new foster carers in Lambeth. Between April 2019 and March 2020, Lambeth Council received 116 enquiries from residents enquiring to be a foster carer. Of these 53 progressed to initial visits and following further checks 6 became new foster carer households in the last year.

Research from the Fostering Network, only one in ten enquiries will become a newly registered household. In order to generate 20 new foster carer households, Lambeth will need to receive 200 new enquiries per year.

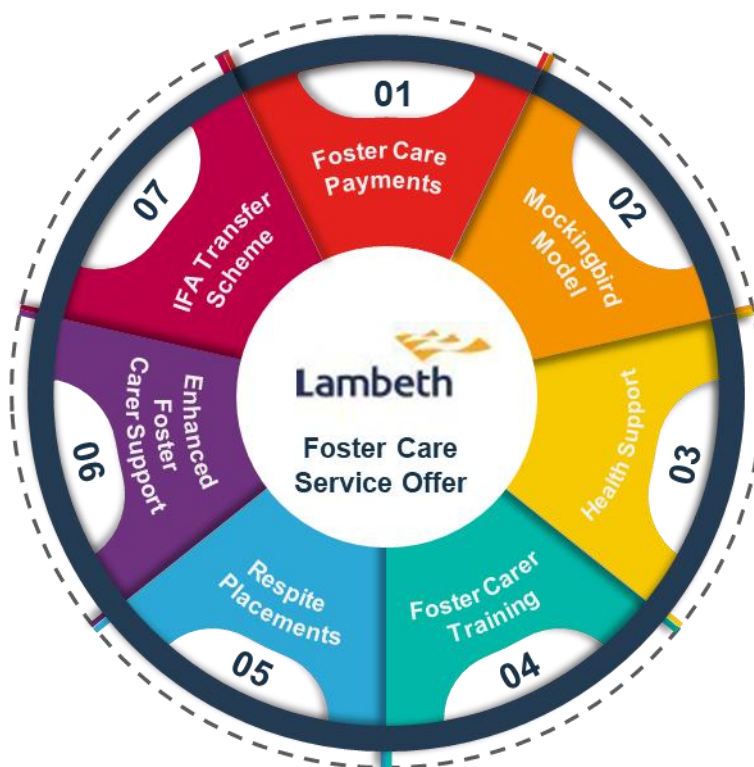
Currently, 11 of our placements are support 'Staying Put' arrangements that allow our young people to stay with their foster carers until the age of 25. In 2020, 61 young people stayed with their foster carer up to the age of 25 years old.

A review of households who have de-registered in the last 3 years will be reviewed and the Principle Social Worker will work with the fostering team to enable a return to caring programme. This Programme will be aimed at encouraging back households who were good and outstanding carers to return to foster care in Lambeth.

5. Developing Services to meet Lambeth's Needs

We have identified that we need to provide the right approach to providing support to foster carers both financially and in terms of the support package that we aim to provide to meet our objectives.

We have benchmarked other local authorities local to ourselves and we are offering a competitive package based on appropriate financial tiers to support children. This will help us attract foster carers and also keep our carers with us in Lambeth to support our journey to provide good services and deliver positive outcomes for our children and young people.



We intend to flex the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) in Lambeth. We are proposing a hub and spoke approach to supporting foster carers and our children who are placed with them. The model is based on the notion of the extended family, where members are available to provide day-to-day help and care. The Hub model brings together clusters of between 6 and 10 'satellite homes' to form a 'constellation'.

Research has shown that Mockingbird is also a model that has been seen to be resilient in the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown according to other authorities who have it.

We hope to introduce our first constellation in 2020/2021 and increase the number of constellations to two per year over the duration of this Strategy. We will review this approach throughout the life of this Strategy.



In Lambeth, we are proud to have a fostering community that is made up of truly passionate caring people. We know that some children and young people in foster care will require a particularly high level of support due to their emotional needs and we have designed our model meet this need.

We will introduce liaison workers from a health background within our hub and spoke model. These roles will include Clinical Child Therapists and or Clinical Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists (SALT). This combination of support will operate alongside specialist social workers to support foster carers with our children. We know published from research we can support placement stability by providing high quality therapeutic support to foster carers and the children and young people who are placed with them.

We will encourage CPD with our foster carers and will be rolling out a new programme of training that aligns with our practice model "The Heart of Practice". We will be training our carers utilising trauma informed practice models alongside Systemic and Attachment models of support to enable our foster carers to support children our children thrive in their placements. We will co-ordinate this through our fostering service and make sure all foster carers have access to our training scheme that will operate throughout the year. This model will support the opportunity to grow in house therapeutic placements to help meet the needs of our children who need placements.

To support both new and existing foster carers we have reviewed the model we provide for respite care across the in-house fostering service. We are proposing to provide more respite placements using new and existing foster carers respite placements. We will also provide carers in our new constellations with the opportunity to access the hub home at the centre of our new networks models to support respite placements.

We will support the development of specialist therapeutic placements through our new financial, health and training offer with our existing foster carers. We will also grow new foster carers to

help provide mother and baby placements to support placements which are currently met through IFA placements.

We are also committed to support foster carers move from IFA Agencies to our new in-house service. To support foster carers with this transition we will match the rates of pay they receive from their agency in the first year of them joining us to encourage IFA foster carers to join us here in Lambeth as part of our foster carer network.

6. Marketing Activities

Our target per year over the next three years is to attract a net increase of 20 households per year. This is a challenging target to grow our network by approximately 25% per year from our current figures.

The market for both in house foster carer and agency foster carers is competitive and therefore we need a comprehensive marketing approach to explain our new model that cuts across multiple channels. This will allow us to reach the widest pool of potential new foster carers or to encourage those who have left our in-house service to return.

We actively participate in national schemes such as Fostering Fortnight and have extended the Programme within Lambeth.

Lambeth Marketing Approach



We are proposing an omnichannel approach to our marketing activities using a number of differing methods and mechanisms to capture the widest pool of potential foster carers.

We will be using local newspapers including the Brixton Bugle, Brixton Buzz, and local newsletters to help promote our in house fostering. We also intend to continue to use traditional marketing methods such as the use of billboards around Brixton and in neighboring authorities*. We will continue to use transport hubs and buses to place adverts relating to fostering in Lambeth on key routes.

We will be promoting the use of digital channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media platforms to raise awareness of our fostering activities to encourage the growth of new foster carers.

We will continue to promote inhouse fostering with our own workforce and encourage those within our partner and commissioned agencies to promote becoming a carer where they can contribute to make a difference.

We will be taking an evidence-based approach to our marketing strategies and approaches based on measures of success. We will be prioritising the most effective methods of fostering recruitment and allocating our marketing budgets appropriately.

7. Foster Care Improvement Project

To support the recruitment of foster carers we have launched a fostering improvement project to support the development and launch of our new service model.

The fostering improvement project will report into our Ofsted Improvement Plan to provide the levels of assurance that our new model is taking shape and making a difference to the children and young people of Lambeth who access these services.

We have developed a timeline and plan to track our journey to provide the services outlined in this Strategy which will be reviewed by Senior Leaders, Elected Members and the Lambeth Together Partnership to review its progress.

8. Summary

We are committed to our in-house fostering services in Lambeth, and we will through our innovation teams deliver the required activities to grow our in-house fostering services.

We have set challenging and stretching targets to deliver in Years 2 and 3 and know that we are seeking to substantially increase the numbers of foster carers in our service. We are committed to providing services to support children in borough through our own dedicated services, and to provide placements that encourage our children to thrive.