



Statement of Purpose 2021-2022
The Fostering Service



Lambeth

Statement of Purpose

April 2021

Version Control:

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1.0	April 2021	Shkelqim Luma, Head of Service Fostering & Permanency	Raul Butron Assistant Director, Corporate Parenting	30 March 2022

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 London Borough of Lambeth Fostering Service serves a diverse range of children and families who have experienced adversity in their lives. Our service users come from a spectrum of backgrounds and compositions. This means we must engage with children and families from all backgrounds, cultures and experiences. Valuing diversity and difference enables individuals to take account of their strongest qualities and abilities, empowering them to be utilised to their fullest.
- 1.2 The following Statement of Purpose sets out the broad aims and objectives of the service, the management/staff structures, services provided, the principles and standards of care that are expected and the procedures for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing foster carers.
- 1.3 This Statement of Purpose is designed to meet the requirements of the Children Act 1989, The National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011, the Care Standards Act 2001, Care Planning Regulations 2010 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (2013). The fostering service seeks to promote the principles and practices enshrined in this legislation. The Statement is reviewed regularly and updated to include changes in legislation as well as changes and developments in the service.
- 1.4 The Statement of Purpose is available on the Lambeth's internet website at: www.lambeth.gov.uk/fostering. It is routinely made available to foster carers, children looked after and fostering agency partners. It is shared with fostering panel members and staff working in the fostering services.
- 1.5 Following the outbreak and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this Statement of Purpose has been reviewed in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic. References to procedures and processes involving assessments, support visits, training, and other meetings are in the context of measures taken to continue the service whilst adhering to Public Health England advice.

2. Guiding Principles

- Placing the needs of children first, to recognise children, young people and carers as individuals and take their views into consideration.
- Promoting equality, diversity and eliminating discrimination in all its forms and treating our service users, carers and partner agencies with dignity and respect.
- Placing our children at the centre of what we do and support foster carers to do the same and promote working partnership with children and their families.
- Promote and safeguard the welfare of children throughout their childhood and provide children with a caring, safe experience of living in families.
- Ensure that all children's health needs are met and for all out children to fulfil their potential in education and that young people are supported to move into independence in a planned way.
- Promote equality of opportunity, recognising and providing for each child and young person's ethnic, cultural and religious needs, ensuring that staff and carers value disability.

- Working with a range of professionals, we aim to ensure that children and young people and their carers are provided with the services and support to meet their needs.
- We do not discriminate against applicants on the grounds of gender, religion, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, nationality, disability and sexual orientation.
- We recruit carers on the basis of the needs of the department and the children it looks after, setting annual targets.
- The Fostering Service is committed to improving outcomes for children and will actively promote and improve the life chances of children we look after.
- We value carers' own children and extended family and the support they offer to children looked after.
- Lambeth recognises that foster carers are valuable members of the team working with a child. As such, they are involved in all aspects of caring and planning for children they are looking after.

3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The fostering service actively contributes towards improving its own performance against national standards and assisting the department in achieving the highest possible performance indicators.
- 3.2 Aims: There are eight specific aims for the fostering service to achieve.

Aim 1: Recruit foster carers who can offer a range of placements providing for the assessed needs of looked-after children and young people in the service.

Objectives:

- To run foster carer recruitment campaigns approving carers from a range of backgrounds to meet the diverse needs of Looked After Children in the boroughs.
- To offer a timely and courteous response to prospective foster carers enquiries, assessing suitable candidates.
- To offer prospective carers a preparation group based on the Skills to Foster model.
- To complete assessments in a comprehensive and timely manner.
- To complete assessments within six months' but no more than eight months' at a maximum.
- To complete Connected Persons (Regulations 24) assessments within 24 weeks.
- To involve approved foster carers in all stages of the recruitment process rewarding them suitably for any work they undertake.

Aim 2: Support foster carers in the work they do with young people, providing appropriate care and ensuring that young people's emotional, physical, health and education needs are met.

Objectives:

- To provide an annual training programme for foster carers.

- To provide at least monthly support groups for foster carers and connected persons foster carers by offering a range of times and locations to suit different foster carer's needs.
- To pay a fee to foster carers for the tasks they undertake and to provide appropriate financial allowances enabling foster carers to care for children without assuming financial burden on them.
- To provide suitable and coordinated support services to all carers in addition to visits from their supervising social worker and the child's social worker.
- To provide foster carers and connected persons foster carers with the support they need to think about their own social and economic well-being, ensuring that they continue to develop themselves.

Aim 3: Treat all those involved with the fostering task with respect, promote equality and pay due consideration to individual needs. To promote equality and reduce discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, religion, culture, language, gender, disability and sexual orientation.

Objectives:

- To recruit foster carers who reflect the background and needs of children requiring placement through targeted recruitment activity.
- To offer training to all carers and staff that will improve skills, knowledge, awareness and good working methods promoting anti-discriminatory practice.
- To arrange for interpreters and translation of material when this is necessary and reasonable.

Aim 4: Supervise foster carers and connected persons foster carers to ensure they offer appropriate and safe foster care for Looked After Children.

Objectives:

- To visit carers as required but at least every six weekly and to maintain at no less than monthly contact with them.
- To complete supervision pro forma for each visit which, details outcomes and actions from the meeting an agreed copy of which is provided for the foster carer.
- To complete all annual reviews on time for foster carers and connected persons foster carers.
- To undertake annual inspections of foster homes' including a health and safety check and to undertake at least one unannounced visit per year with carers.
- To develop with foster carers a Safer Caring Agreement within each foster home and foster placement.
- To ensure appropriate checks are regularly updated within timescales on all carers and individuals attached to the home.

Aim 5: Consult with service users, providers, professionals, and other agencies to highlight service development needs and to implement these where possible and appropriate.

Objectives:

- To have a regular consultation meeting with carers and other parts of the service including more senior managers and other agencies to gather the views of carers.
- To record the meetings and implement agreed actions within set timescales incorporating suggestions into service plans when necessary.
- To use annual review of carers', to gather information from foster carers and connected persons foster carers, Children Looked After, their parents and others with whom the fostering service works in partnership to improve the training, support and supervision of carers and to highlight ways in which the service can be developed.
- To consult with and encourage the participation of Children Looked After in service development through a variety of means including the Corporate Parenting Board, developing a Children in Care Council, and carer's annual review consultation forms.

Aim 6: Retain foster carers and develop a competent, experienced and appropriate trained and qualified placements resource.

Objectives:

- To provide induction training to newly approved foster carers including Connected Persons foster carers.
- To offer a comprehensive training programme that links to national standards and enable carers to complete the training development standards for foster carers and connected persons foster carers.
- To provide accurate and up-to-date information to carers about a child or young person's history and current needs ensuring that carers are provided with all relevant family information.
- To develop supports and services that takes account of the foster carer and their family's needs.
- To organise social events for and with carers to show appreciation for the commitment they make in caring for children and young people.

Aim 7: Work in partnership with foster carers and connected persons foster carers, children and young people and their families and with other professionals and agencies.

Objectives:

- To provide an effective and efficient placement service so that requests for placement can be made easily, are assessed and processed effectively and efficiently, with children being provided with the most appropriate placement for their needs.
- To provide full and appropriate information to foster carers regarding placements, and the planning for children including written care plans and children look after materials.
- To deal with all complaints and allegations in a way that fits with the councils and legislative requirements.
- To give full weight and credibility to carers' views when determining plans and outcomes for children.

Aim 8: Ensure that the fostering team is run in an effective and efficient way with qualified staff so that children are suitably safeguarded and benefit from their time in foster care.

Objectives:

- Recruit staff with the appropriate qualifications, skills knowledge and experience for their posts, ensuring that all appropriate checks and references are undertaken.
- To offer staff appropriate training, supervision and development opportunities so that they are able to carry out their duties in an appropriate way.
- To provide a service that meets legislative requirements as well as local and national policy and procedural guidelines, while seeking to improve its service delivery.

4. Management and staffing structure

4.1 The Fostering Service is part of Lambeth Children's Social Care Division (CSC) and is coordinated by a Head of Service. The Service includes a Fostering Assessment and Recruitment Team, Fostering Support Team, ART (Access to Resource) Team, Children's Social Care Payments Team, SGO/Connected Persons Team, and the Agency Advisor & Permanency Lead.

4.2 The overall management of the service is the responsibility of the Head of Service, Fostering and Permanency, Shkelqim Luma, details as follows:

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Fostering & Permanency
London Borough of Lambeth
Tel: 0207 926 2558 | Mob: 0784 930 5849 | Email: sluma1@lambeth.gov.uk

Office Address: Children's Social Care, Civic Centre – 2nd Floor, 6 Brixton Hill, London, SW2 1EG

Postal Address: London Borough Of Lambeth, P.O. Box 734, WINCHESTER, SO23 5DG

4.3 The fostering service comprises:

Head of Service

Agency Advisor & Permanency Lead

Team Manager of Referral, recruitment, and assessment team

- 1 Advanced Social Work Practitioner for Fostering Assessment & Support team
- 4 Full Time Social Workers
- 2 Family Finding Social Worker
- 1 Marketing & Recruitment Officer

Team manager of Support and Supervision of Foster Carers

- 7 Full Time Social Workers
- 1 Learning & Development Officer

Team manager of Connected Persons, SGO and Post Order Support Team

- 1 Advanced Social Work Practitioner
- 4 Full Time Social Workers
- 2 Part Time Social Workers
- 4 Full Time Social Worker (Post Order Support)
- 1 Post Order Contact Coordinator

Team manager of Access to Resource Team

- 5 Placement Officers
- 1 Commissioning & Development officer

Team manager of Children's Social Care Payments Team

- 1 Senior Payments Officers
- 1 Payments Officer
- 8 Business Support Officers

5. Management and staffing structure

5.1 The fostering service provides a range of services to children and carers. These include a duty and placement service, the recruitment and assessment of foster carers, as well as support and supervision to placements. These services are provided by social workers specialising in these areas of service provision.

5.2 Referral, recruitment, and assessment team

5.2.1 Recruitment and Assessment of prospective foster carers from within the community to meet the needs of Lambeth children and young people who become looked after and a foster placement is the provision identified to best meet their needs. The team also undertake specific family finding for children and young people needing permanent placement.

5.2.2 With assistance and input from the recruitment officer, tasks include the: Design of advertising and recruitment materials; Liaison with specialist advisers and agencies on recruitment matters; Coordination of advertising and recruitment campaigns; Responses to enquiries including dissemination of information packs; Initial visits to prospective carers (some held virtually due to risks surrounding COVID 19); Running

pre-approval 'Skills to Foster' preparation courses (some held virtually due to risks surrounding COVID 19);

- 5.2.3 Assessment of prospective foster carers and presentation of reports to fostering Panel. A virtual panel has been set up to ensure this is facilitated with all panel members present and prevent delay for cases being presented for approval; Setting up newly approved carers with equipment required for fostering.

5.3 **Support and supervision of foster carers.**

- 5.3.1 The fostering service currently supports and supervises all respite, short-term intermediate and long-term foster placements, including the Connected Persons who are foster carers.
- 5.3.2 Supervisory visits take place when required, but with a maximum period between visits of six weeks. Contact with foster carers is maintained on at least every four to six weeks. During the lockdown visits are conducted virtually with weekly calls to carers.
- 5.3.3 Additional visits are made for the purposes of support to the foster carer or any member of the foster family alongside telephone calls and emails to share information.
- 5.3.4 It may be agreed between the foster carers, Supervising Social Worker and Team Manager that supervision meetings are held less frequently, in the case of a carer who provides support care only for one child or where it has been formally agreed as permanent placement which is intended to last until the child is 18 years old.
- 5.3.5 The decision is at the discretion of the Team Manager. Any agreed variation from monthly supervision MUST be clearly recorded by the authorising Team Manager in case notes and highlighted in the Annual Review [Regulation 28(2)(c)(i) - The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010].
- 5.3.6 Prospective foster carers are initially prepared for fostering through attendance at Skills to Foster courses and the assessment process.
- 5.3.7 Following approval, an induction and other training courses are offered on a regular basis. Training is provided around core areas as highlighted by the National Minimum Standards. Foster carer's views regarding training are sought during supervisory visits, the annual review and in training programme reviews.
- 5.3.8 Newly approved foster carers are linked to a peer mentor for the first year after approval for extra support.
- 5.3.9 An annual training programme is planned on the basis of assessed need within the carer group. (some held virtually due to risks surrounding COVID 19).
- 5.3.10 Foster carers must complete the Training Support and Development Standards for foster care and all new foster carers are expected to complete the required workbook within twelve months of approval. Regular workshops are held to support the foster carers in achieving this.

5.4 **Connected Persons, SGO and Post Order Support**

- 5.4.1 These carers are always known to the child or their family and are only approved for these specific children. Many family and friends carers will have children placed with them in an emergency following the decision that the children cannot safely remain at home and will need to become Looked After following an assessment.
- 5.4.2 When this happens, social workers have a duty to consider whether children can be placed with their relatives or friends of the family. Some children then remain with these carers if they are unable to return home or may move onto other carers or adoption.
- 5.4.3 The Family Justice Review introduced the requirement that care proceedings must be completed within 26 weeks so that early permanence can be achieved for Children Looked After. The Connected Persons & Post Order Support team will provide a dedicated service to undertake all Family and Friends Assessments within the fostering service.
- 5.4.4 All family and friends carers are required to have the same statutory checks and meet the required national minimum standards to be approved as foster carers. They attend Connected Persons induction training prior to their approval or shortly after having a child placed with them.
- 5.4.5 Following their approval, family and friends carers are allocated a supervising social worker from the Fostering Support team who is responsible for the carer's supervision, support and discussion of individual training needs following their approval at panel as Connected Persons foster carers.
- 5.4.6 Family and Friends carers will be supported in considering Special Guardianship. The Post Order team has developed arrangements for Special Guardianship support for those family and friends' carers who become Special Guardians.

5.5 **Agency Adviser/Permanency Lead**

- 5.5.1 To oversee the permanency planning process for looked after children and young people and ensure decisions are made in a timely manner. To provide professional advice to the Lambeth Fostering and Permanency Panel.
- 5.5.2 To collaborate with partner Boroughs as the designated operational interface with Adopt London South Regional Adoption Agency (ALS RAA).

5.6 **Children's Social Care Payments Team**

- 5.6.1 The Payment Processing Team was established in March 2020 to provide a single point of contact for all payment-related issues, queries and information. It provides a customer- and internal-facing service accessible via dedicated phone line and email.
- 5.6.2 The team objectives are to promote good financial practice: ensuring care packages are raised in good time so that providers and carers can be paid promptly, enabling improved forecasting and effective budget control.

5.7 **Access to Resource Team (Placements Team)**

- 5.7.1 The majority of referrals will be made via the Placement Request Form on Mosaic (Information Recording System). Referrals need to contain full information about the needs of the child / young person, including contact and how they want the placement to meet the need. A risk analysis is also included both of the child/ young person and in some instances their family.
- 5.7.2 The Allocated Social Worker should fill in sections 1 – 5 and obtain the relevant managerial approval to undertake a placement search.
- 5.7.3 The Placement Request includes the Financial Care Package proposal and alongside this the newly instituted Placement Search form. Both forms are to be completed by Placement Officers only.
- 5.7.4 The Placement Search form should be used to record and evidence all placement search efforts and to record providers response. The Financial Care Package proposal should be used to record, and evidence all proposed placement costings and all elements of proposed care packages.
- 5.7.5 Placement Officers are required to check referral forms and ensure that all mandatory fields are completed and to ensure that prior to undertaking a placement search that a Service Manager has recorded agreement to any such search taking place. In the instance of requests for residential children's homes such authority must be provided by the Director for Children's Services.
- 5.7.6 The search for a placement should always start with inhouse provision, and if a placement is not available, the next step is to ask the Service Manager to authorise search for an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA). We use the South London Commissioning Programme as the first port of call always for an IFA search, then London Care Services before we spot purchase. We use IFAs that are Good or Outstanding only.
- 5.7.7 In the event that there no IFA availability, then we seek authorisation from AD for Semi-Independent Placement (SIL) and if a Residential Placement is required, this authorisation must come from The Director of Children's Social Care. The residential placements must also be rated good or outstanding. In the event that placements have a less rating such as Requires Improvement or Inadequate, the Director need to be informed and joint risk assessment would need to be undertaken between the child's social worker and the placement team.
- 5.7.8 It must be noted that no child under the age of 16 it to be into a SIL provision as this would be an illegal placement.
- 5.7.9 Also, in line with the Directorate's position (July, 2020) which has been subsequently supported by guidance from the Children's Commissioner (September, 2020) no children aged 16 or 17 will be placed within unregulated provision without the express agreement of the Assistant Director for Children's Services or in absence the Director of Children's Services. Placement Officers are responsible for ensuring that any requests for such placements must also first be discussed with the ART Team Manager and Service Manager.

The role of the Commissioning and Development Officer (ART)

- 5.7.10 The Commissioning and development officer will also maintain oversight of all young people placed in non-framework SILs for Lambeth and all young people placed in Children's homes.
- 5.7.11 A work plan has been developed (6 monthly inspection cycle of all non-framework semi-independent provision and all children's homes) to focus on quality assuring all the non-framework provisions and children's homes that are used by Lambeth, to ensure that a high level of care is received by all Lambeth young people and children.
- 5.7.12 To best mitigate and manage over expenditure for all placements, the social worker must agree the placement can meet the needs of the young person and make the final decision to accept the placement on behalf of the child or young person. All expenditure must be agreed by respective Senior Managers and Social Work teams are responsible for ensuring this undertaking.
- 5.7.13 In all instances where an unlisted non-framework provider has no history of working with the borough or is introducing a new service, a quality insurance visit will be conducted by the Commissioning and Development Officer (ART) to ensure that the placement meets Lambeth's expectations & standards and can therefore provide a safe & good placement for Lambeth's young people. Once the visit has been completed and if the provider passes the inspection, they will be added to the non-framework list of providers which is maintained by the ART team.
- 5.7.14 To ensure the consistent quality assurance of non-framework provisions regular monitoring and inspection has been introduced. The Commissioning & Development Officer (ART) inspects all non-framework provisions, where Lambeth young people are placed, on a 6-monthly cycle as a measure to ensure that a high level of service is delivered to young people placed by the authority.
- 5.7.15 The regular inspection of provisions will further provide an opportunity for the borough to maintain oversight and review of best value service.

6. Procedure and policy

- 6.1 The fostering service is responsible for developing guidance, policy and procedures relevant to the fostering service.

Supervision and support to foster carers:

All foster carers have been assigned supervising social worker who is responsible to provide regular supervision session every four to six weeks. During these visits discussion is held about progress of the child/children in placement including physical, emotional, educational and cultural needs. This meeting also provides the opportunity to discuss issues such as a

foster carer's skills and training needs, health and safety issues and communication with professionals.

7. Procedure and policy

The fostering team provides a number of placement types:

- 7.1 Short-term placements: These may be offered for any period from an overnight stay until a child moves to a permanent home after a number of years.
- 7.2 Respite placements: A number of carers are approved to take short-term respite placements only. These may be one-off placements or form part of a care package that enables children to remain with their usual carers for the long term.
- 7.3 Long-term foster placements: Where a child will remain with a foster carer until they are 18 years old or ready to move into independent living.
- 7.4 Interagency placements: Occasionally; when other local authorities are searching for a foster placement, a carer with a vacancy may be matched with that child. That local authority retains responsibility for the child whilst fostering service retains the registration and support of the foster carer. An interagency agreement is signed and an additional fee is paid for the placement.
- 7.5 Connected Persons placements: A number of foster carers are approved specifically for a named child whom they are related to or who is a family friend.
- 7.6 Parent and child placements: A few carers provide placements to parents and children. Parents are sometimes over the age of 18 years old. Often these parents are being assessed on their parenting skills while they are in the foster placement. The foster carer may need to assist in the assessment, keep good written records, and work in partnership with the social workers involved in the assessment. These carers are given additional support and training to manage these often-complex placements.

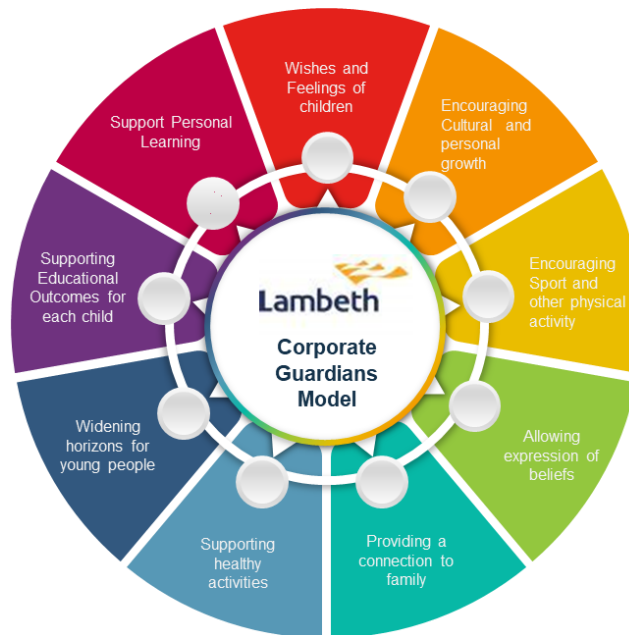
8. Outcomes for children and young people

- 8.1 The outcomes for children and young people that underlie the fostering services work to improve the lives of Children Looked After through:
 - Helping children to be healthy
 - Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe
 - Helping children to achieve and enjoy what they do
 - Helping children to make a positive contribution
 - Achieving economic well-being

These outcomes and principles are also outlined in our Foster Carer Charter and Corporate Guardian Model.

- 8.2 Corporate Guardians are an extension to our corporate parenting model in practice in our residential and fostering placements. As Corporate Guardians we have outlined what this model means through a variety of concepts and approaches that we wish to see in all

placements regardless of the provider. We will be using this approach to manage any placement we make and to review how we are improving outcomes for children and young people.



8.3 In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

8.4 **Helping children to be healthy.**

- Foster carers are given information about a child's health and are clear what responsibility has been delegated to them in making health related decisions from the placement planning meeting. This includes information about the administration of medication.

- Foster carers are provided with health awareness training. This includes training on first aid, health and safety, sex and relationships, drug and alcohol awareness, and meeting the emotional needs of children.
- Foster carers receive an annual health and safety check and supervising social workers continuously monitoring health and safety issues.
- Foster carers promote an active and healthy lifestyle by providing healthy food and snack options and encourage children to engage in physical activities.
- The fostering service will work in close partnership with the health team for LAC to ensure that there is partnership working to improve the health outcomes of children placed with foster carers. This includes regular meetings with the team and managers, putting together specialised training for carers including fostering changes and Health courses.

8.5 Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe.

- Every foster placement will have a safer caring agreement which is agreed at the placement planning meeting.
- Foster carers will report missing children and follow expectations as laid out in the Missing Children Procedure. If a child goes missing the foster carer actively tries to locate and encourage the child to come home or talk to their social worker.
- Foster carers will be supported to help talk to children and monitor their use of the internet and mobile phones to ensure they are safeguarded against bullying and abuse.
- Foster carers help children learn how to protect themselves from abuse and provide a safe and secure home.
- Foster carers are trained in child protection, safer caring, risk management, record keeping and understanding abuse and neglect.
- Foster carers make appropriate risk assessments in some areas that they have been delegated authority and encouraging children take appropriate risks. For example, Foster carers should determine if a child can stay overnight at a friend's house by getting to know the child's friends and their parents or carers.
- The fostering service (and the services arranged or provided by it) will seek to promote and safeguard the welfare of Children Looked After and other children affected by fostering placements as its paramount concern.

8.6 Helping children to achieve and enjoy what they do.

- Foster carers support children and young people to achieve academically. Foster carers take children to and from school until they are old enough to travel by themselves. Foster carers attend parents' meetings and maintain regular contact with the school. Foster carers participate in the Pupil Education Plan meeting and advocate on behalf of the child where appropriate.
- Foster carers ensure that they are supporting children's education at home by helping with homework, reading to children and playing an active role in the child's education.
- Foster carers support children to engage in a variety of leisure activities that support the child to develop confidence and interests.
- Foster carers are provided with training on education and IT skills.

- The fostering service will work closely with the virtual school and activities officer to ensure that children are able to enjoy and achieve. This includes regular meetings with the team and managers, running service and putting together specialised training for carers.

8.7 Foster carer helping children to make a positive contribution for future.

- Maintaining links for a child with their family, friends and other social and community groups is important. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that these links are maintained and developed when that is in the child's best interest. Foster carers should support children with contact arrangement and where safe to do so foster carers should take children to contact or facilitate contact within the home.
- The majority of children will benefit from placement within a loving and caring family setting. The fostering service seeks to provide this through the foster carers it approves. Children should receive a child friendly foster carers' profile before they are placed, where possible. Children should also receive a Child's Guide to Fostering when they are first placed. Children should be made to feel part of the family and not made to feel different than foster carer's own children.
- Children's wishes and feelings should be taken into account and they should know how to make a complaint.
- Placements should take into account children's ethnicity, religion, language, culture and dietary requirements. Where a need cannot be met directly for example, where child's ethnicity is not matched, compensating actions will be taken to ensure that a child will develop a positive view of themselves, their family and cultural background.

8.8 Achieving economic well-being

- Foster carers should save for children regularly and help teach children the importance of saving. Foster carers should open a bank account for children where possible and help to support them to learn budgeting skills.
- Foster carers should help prepare children for independent living. This includes helping young people develop practical skills such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, washing and take responsibility for personal healthcare.
- Foster carers expected to participate in the Pathway Planning Process so that plan for children is clear and realistic.
- Training is provided on preparing young people for independence.

9. Procedures for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing carers

9.1 Recruiting.

The foster carers recruitment strategy sets out the plans and targets for foster carer recruitment, the annual budget and how this will be spent and who will undertake the tasks.

9.2 Approving.

Foster carers are assessed and presented to the Fostering panel for a recommendation. Following this the Agency Decision maker confirms approvals after recommendations are made.

9.3 Training

Training is offered to all foster carers. Initially this is through the preparation course, skills to foster, which prospective carers are expected to undertake during or soon after their assessment has been completed. An annual training programme is offered on a range of topics that seek to ensure the training and development standards for foster carers are met.

9.4 The training programme is compatible with the National Minimum Standards for fostering services. For more detail see the foster carer's training programme.

9.5 All new foster carers will be expected to complete the required training and development standard workbook within 12 months of being approved to show how they meet the standards and all existing foster carers should have already completed the workbook.

9.6 Support and Supervision of foster carers.

9.7 As well as the support and supervision offered by Social Workers from the fostering team. Each foster carer has assigned supervising social workers who supervises and also regularly liaise with other professionals' i.e Children's Services, health, Virtual School in every four to six weeks. In addition, there are further supports available to foster carers:

- A. Fee Payment Scheme: Foster carers are paid a taxable fee for the direct tasks they perform and a separate allowance for expenses in relation to the costs of caring for children.
- B. Equipment and other provisions: A set-up grant is available at the point of approval for basic items needed such as beds/bedding and wardrobes.
- C. Training and support groups: Carers are provided with an annual training programme where they are able to identify trainings of interest together with their supervising social worker.
- D. Children Looked After Children's Support and Review Team specialist services: This team offers a comprehensive multi-agency approach to services for Looked After Children, foster carers and social Workers.
- E. Membership of Fostering Network: All foster carers have an annual subscription to Fostering Network paid for by the department. This offers regular mailings, information and helpline on matters relating to foster care and is accessible directly and independently by foster carers.
- F. Annual trips and celebrations to show the department's appreciation of Foster carers.
- G. Activities and events include:
 - Long service awards annually
 - Foster carers celebration event annually
 - Celebratory events for Children Looked After annually
- H. Peer Mentoring: The fostering team will aim to link newly approved carers to a more experienced foster carer within the first year of approval.
- I. Duty Support: The fostering team runs a duty service from Monday to Friday between 9 am to 5 pm. The work covered by the duty system is as follows: referrals for foster placements, arrangements for in-house foster placement, and cover for supervising Social Worker who may be on leave and engaged in other commitments. The duty worker can be contacted via dedicated telephone number 0207 926 3006 and email FosteringSupportDuty@lambeth.gov.uk

- J. **Emergency Duty Support:** There is an Emergency Duty Team (EDT) which can provide support to foster carers in the evenings and weekends (outside of business hours) to offer support and identify placements where needed. This team is supported by the fostering service and can provide support and advice for when children that go missing or where there is an emergency.
- K. From 2nd of January 2021 Lambeth will also operate a dedicated fostering out of hours service, from Monday – Friday 5pm-9am and Saturday-Sunday (and public holidays) 24 hours. This option means there is 24 hours service, 365 days per year as the day team will pick up from 9am to 5pm during the normal service. The service can be contacted via dedicated telephone number 0207 926 3006 and email FosteringSupportDuty@lambeth.gov.uk
- L. This advice line supplements the service provided by the Emergency Duty Team. Lambeth Fostering Service's out of hour's service is the first port of call for carers needing advice or support. The support line is for the exclusive use of Lambeth foster carers once they are approved.
- M. The support line is staffed by the Fostering Service Staff (via the mobile telephone) who has Foster carers should telephone the support line when:
- a child in care their care goes missing or is not back at a pre-arranged time
 - if a child becomes seriously ill, has an accident or needs hospital treatment
 - if a child is involved in an incident where the police have been or are likely to be called.
 - if the foster carer wants to discuss difficult behaviour or a child has made allegations about another adult, member of the foster carer's own family household.
- N. **Therapeutic Support:** At times foster carers may require therapeutic support to help with a challenging placement or to deal with personal issues that may arise as a result of their role as foster carers. The fostering team is committed to providing this additional support when required with professional input from the Lambeth Children Looked After Mental Health Service (CLAMHS) that is available for specific intervention and support.
- O. **Support groups:** Bi-monthly support groups are facilitated by foster carers for foster carers and open to all new as well as established carers. The group provides a range of activities and other social and cultural events.
- P. **Lambeth Foster Carers Association (LFCA):** Foster carers are offered support by their local foster carers group. The Head of Service and Lambeth Foster Care Association (LFCA) committee members meet regularly to discuss service development issues and matters needing a resolution. LFCA also provides independent individual support and advocacy. Twice yearly meetings are held with the Divisional Director, Corporate Parenting, Children's Social Care.
- Q. **Training Programme:** A comprehensive post-approval training programme exists, combining online with face to face training and this includes completion of the TSDS (Training, Support and Development Standards).
- R. **Foster Carers Recordings:** Foster carers are provided with a diary each year and are provided with support to purchase a laptop/computer to facilitate recording. Separate recordings must be made for each child and carer and the expectation is that a minimum of weekly recordings is provided.

Foster carers are offered advice on confidentiality and keeping records safe whether in a lockable cabinet and/or password protected file on their computer.

Foster Carers are offered training on keeping records, their importance and implications. These issues are also explored in Managing Allegations Training.

9.8 Reviewing

- 9.8.1 The Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer chairs all annual reviews of foster carers. This creates independence from the fostering service line management structure. These reviews are being held virtually during the COVID19 pandemic period.
- 9.8.2 At least annually, there is a standardised review process involving foster carers/connected person foster carers and their families, parents and others with parental responsibility, children and young people, supervising social worker and locality social workers as well as others who might have an interest in the foster placement.
- 9.8.3 The annual review considers the foster carer's performance during the year, training undertaken, working relationships, finance matters, placements made and their outcomes. They are also able to give their views on placements, how the department and other agencies or professionals have worked with them. Consultation forms are sent out to children who have been placed, foster carers and their children, social workers and independent reviewing officers so that their views too can be included in the review.
- 9.8.4 The review is usually held within the foster carers' home with the foster carers, the supervising social Worker and the fostering independent reviewing officer present. Occasionally, others may attend the review including the fostering team manager or principal social worker or someone to act as a support or advocate for the foster carer.

10. Complaints

- 10.1 Lambeth Council has a complaints procedure which sets out the process in relation to the three stages of our complaint's investigation process. We aim to resolve complaints at a local level, that is: Stage 1 Informal Problem Solving.
- 10.2 The Fostering Service has a Complaints against Foster Carers Procedure. All complaints are recorded and reviewed in line with procedural guidelines.
- 10.3 Foster carers also have access to the council's complaints procedure. Staff and carers are provided with safeguarding training as part of the ongoing professional training and development programme.
- 10.4 Records of investigations and outcome of complaints are held by the Complaints Department and the information is used for Quality Assurance monitoring and service improvement.
- 10.5 Any service user can make a complaint if they are not satisfied with the service the agency provides. However, we encourage service users or customers to try and resolve the matter with the social worker. If the service user is still not satisfied, the formal complaints process offers three stages.
- 10.6 Telephone the Complaints Team

Manager on:
Phone 020 7926 9777
Or the Complaints and Business
Support:
Email cbsteam@lambeth.gov.uk

11. Useful Contacts

11.1 Adoption, Fostering & Children's Services are inspected and regulated by Ofsted:

Clive House,
70 Petty France,
London SW1H 9EX
0300 013 0415
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Contact Form: General enquiries
General enquiries: 0300 123 1231

11.2 Corambaaf

41 Brunswick Square,
London
WC1N 1AZ
Phone: 020 7520 0300
<https://corambaaf.org.uk>

11.3 Fostering Network

87 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8HA
Phone: 020 7620 6400
Fax: 020 7620 6401
Email: info@fostering.net

11.4 Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

The Contract Manager
Unit 4
Pavilion Business Park
Royds Hall Road
Wortley
Leeds
LS12 6AJ
United Kingdom
Email: irm@irm.org.uk

Telephone: 0845 450 3956 (charged at local rate) or 0113 2022080

12. Useful Contacts

Recruitment (Fostering)

Handles enquiries and support for prospective foster carers.

0207 926 8710

FosteringDuty@lambeth.gov.uk

Duty, Supervision & Support

Provides a point of contact for borough-based Social Workers who want to place a child with a foster carer. Handles enquiries and support for foster carers.

0207 926 3006

FosteringSupportDuty@lambeth.gov.uk

Connected Persons & SGO Post Order Support

Provides a point of contact for borough-based Social Workers who want to place a child with a member of their extended family and service to children and families with post order support.

0207 926 6364

SGODuty@lambeth.gov.uk

Access to Resource Team

Identifies appropriate placement provision to meet the needs of Lambeth looked after children and young people, either through family or residential placement.

0207 926 4680

ART@lambeth.gov.uk

Payments Team

This team are responsible for processing payments related to placements.

020 7926 9053

CSCPpayments@lambeth.gov.uk