

Fostering Services

Statement of
Purpose
2022 - 2023



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Introduction

Under the Fostering Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards, Tower Hamlets Council's fostering service is required to have a statement of purpose that sets out the framework of local fostering services and how these will help looked after children to achieve positive outcomes.

This statement of purpose is written as a description of fostering arrangements for children looked after in Tower Hamlets and the services provided which would promote the achievement of these outcomes.

The statement aims to provide information for foster carers, service users, professionals, and members of the public about the fostering service's aims and objectives and how our services will improve outcomes for looked after children. In addition, the service offers age appropriate children's guides to fostering which are given to children at the point of placement to be used by foster carers and social workers to help explain what is happening to them.

The statement has been endorsed by the Senior Leadership team and will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to reflect any developments within the service.

The Fostering Service will ensure that the service is always conducted in a manner consistent with this statement and will provide a copy of this statement to Ofsted. The statement will also be made available to staff members, looked after children and their parents and members of the public and will be available on the Tower Hamlets website.

Any comments or enquiries regarding this statement of purpose should be sent to Nji Oranu, Head of Service, Children's Regulated Services and Resources by telephone on 0207 364 2129 or email: Nji.oranu@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Regulation

Tower Hamlets' fostering service is regulated by Ofsted and is subject to inspections. Inspection reports can be obtained from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 1231

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD



Role of the fostering service

Tower Hamlets Council's fostering service provides alternative accommodation for looked after children, placing them with foster carers living in the borough or in neighbouring boroughs, who have been assessed and approved by Tower Hamlets.

Whenever a child is unable to live with their parents, social workers will normally first seek to place them within the wider family and friends' network. Where this is not possible, the fostering service, in conjunction with our placements team, will identify a suitable foster placement with a Tower Hamlets' foster carer.

Our aim is to make the most effective use of family-based placements so that we make a positive impact on the lives of children and young people who are in the care of Tower Hamlets Council.

As a service, we aim to promote the safety, education, health, welfare and cultural needs of children in our care by effectively recruiting, assessing, training, developing and supervising foster carers.

When matching a child to a foster placement, the fostering service will take the following into account:

- All foster placements will seek to meet the identified emotional and physical needs of the individual child, including their racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, dietary and any other specific needs.
- The fostering service will seek to place siblings together.
- The fostering service will seek to ensure placement stability and avoid multiple moves for children.
- The fostering service will seek to identify placements that can

accommodate contact (where appropriate) with relatives and significant others in the child's network.

- The child's education will be a key consideration whenever choosing placements and every effort will be made to ensure that, wherever possible, the child will remain at their school.
- The fostering service will consider placements for all looked after children giving due regard to their identified needs and their wishes and feelings.
- The fostering service has a commitment to offer Staying Put for all looked after children placed in foster care when they turn 18.

Tower Hamlets Council provides the following foster placement types that have been developed to meet both the general and specific needs of looked after children in Tower Hamlets.

Short-term fostering where foster carers look after a child for a time limited period whilst arrangements for permanence are put in place. This may be rehabilitation to the birth family or a long-term placement with family and friends or another foster carer or adoption.

Long-term fostering can be the preferred permanence option for some children, particularly older children, who maintain close and significant relationships with birth parents or relatives. In some cases, a child's current short-term foster carer can be approved as their long-term carer, and carers will be encouraged to consider applying for special guardianship orders as this will offer more security to the child. Long-term foster carers will have more authority delegated to them so that they can make a wider range of day to day decisions for the child's care in keeping with their care plan.

Respite carers can offer placements to children for specific short periods to support the child or young person to continue to live at home. This arrangement is also used to support and maintain foster placements by providing foster carers with short breaks from caring.

Family and friends foster care is encouraged by the fostering service as this type of care arrangement often provides better outcomes for children, because they are placed with familiar people and are better able to maintain links with their wider family and community. In many of these cases the carer will be temporarily approved as a foster carer under Regulation 24 of the Fostering Regulations for up to 16 weeks, as their permanence plan is considered.

Where the long-term plan for the child will be to remain with their Family and Friends foster care, the carer will be fully assessed as a Tower Hamlets foster carer. Family and Friends foster care are also encouraged to apply for special guardianship orders as this will offer more security to the child and the carer.

Tower Hamlets supports children to remain with their foster carer beyond the age of 18 years under the '**Staying Put**' policy. This policy aims to provide young people with the continuation of care and support from a carer with whom they have a strong nurturing relationship in order to mirror the gradual transition to independence experienced by other young people of the same age. The young person is no longer looked after and fostering regulations no longer apply. Instead, the placement becomes an 'arrangement' between the foster carer, the young person, and Tower Hamlets Children's Services.

The service has an **Alternative to Residential Care scheme** to care for children with very challenging behaviour and emotional needs and who would ordinarily be placed in a residential setting. Many of these children will have experienced a traumatic childhood and may have a history of placement breakdown. It is widely acknowledged that residential placements are not the most appropriate resource for some of these young people as these placements often make the existing behaviour patterns worse. However, placing children with experienced foster carers can help set boundaries around their behaviour and in turn help them to overcome their problems.

Foster to adopt placements to reduce delay for children moving into their permanent placement. It enables a child to be placed with adoptive carers under a fostering arrangement, whilst ongoing court assessments are completed. Following the granting of a placement order, the placement will then turn into the child's adoptive placement.

As of 31 March 2023, Tower Hamlets Fostering Service we have 106 fostering households of which 17 are connected persons/family and friends.



Principles and standards of care

The child's safety and welfare are paramount and foster care should provide them with a chance to grow up in a safe, secure family environment that meets their needs and helps them develop to their full potential.

- Where a child needs alternative accommodation, Tower Hamlets will look to place them within the wider family and friends' network in the first instance, where this is consistent with their welfare. If this is not possible, children will be matched with a foster carer who is best able to meet their needs. Decisions on placements and continued support for the child and their foster carer will be based on rigorous assessment and care planning.
- The fostering service recognises the need for diversity in placement choice to match the child's cultural, ethnic and religious identities as far as possible.
- Services will be administered in a fair manner in keeping with the council's equality and valuing diversity policies.
- The wishes and feelings of children will be sought and acted on where this is consistent with their welfare and a full explanation of all care planning decisions will be given so that children understand why decisions have been made. Children will also be encouraged to participate in the development of Tower Hamlets' services via the Children in Care Council.
- The fostering service recognises the unique role that foster carers play in delivering good outcomes for Looked After Children. The relationship between a carer and the child placed with them will be the central focus of support and interventions. The role of the foster carer as a corporate parent and as a member of the team around the child will be continually supported and strengthened through partnership working.
- Foster care will contribute to good outcomes for Looked After Children by safeguarding and promoting their welfare. To achieve this, placements will provide individualised care that helps children to develop a positive identity, promotes their health and educational achievement, keeps them safe and promotes contact with their birth family and significant others. Where possible and where it is consistent with their welfare, siblings will be placed together.
- For older Looked After Children, foster carers will provide support to help them develop the skills they need to move to independence successfully. Children will be enabled to remain with their foster carer until assessment shows they are ready to move on and the young person is comfortable with this arrangement.
- All placements will offer a suitable home environment for Looked After Children.
- Placement stability will be promoted through good care planning, careful matching and support for foster carers and placements where required. Foster carers will be supported in their role and receive suitable training and supervision.
- Placement stability will be a key goal for Looked After Children with placement moves occurring in a planned manner and only when a statutory Looked After Children

review has agreed that the move is in the child's best interests.

Placements will only end when a new placement has been identified and the child has a school place.

- The fostering service will adhere to the highest standards of management in terms of its staffing and the ethos of the service provided. The confidentiality of Looked After Children and their carers will be maintained at all times except in order to safeguard children.

Key aims of the service

- All Looked After Children will have a care plan and placement plan in place that sets out how social workers and foster carers will work together to achieve good outcomes for the child.
- All Looked After Children will be matched with the most appropriate carer who will be best able to meet all their needs. Care plans will be reviewed regularly through the statutory review process. A permanence plan for every Looked After Child will be in place within four months of their becoming looked after.
- The fostering service will provide information about its services for parents, children, foster carers and professionals, so that everyone is aware of service provision and standards.
- The fostering service and foster carers will work jointly with Looked After Children social workers, the Looked After Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (LAC CAMHS) and other agencies and professionals in order to ensure integrated services for Looked After Children that meet their needs and improve their outcomes.
- The fostering service will ensure that the council meets the statutory sufficiency duty by recruiting a pool of foster carers that meets the diverse needs of Looked After Children in the borough and reflects their cultural, religious and ethnic diversity whilst safeguarding and promoting their welfare. This includes the recruitment of specialist and respite foster carers and foster carers offering parent and child placements.



- The fostering service will provide high quality training and support services for foster carers that will help them to provide a good standard of care for Looked After Children and will regularly monitor and review placements to ensure they continue to meet the care standards required. Foster carers will be involved in creating an annual training, development and support plan, in collaboration with their supervising social worker.
- Looked After Children and foster carers will be made aware of complaints procedures and encouraged to exercise this right. Tower Hamlets will ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly under the council's complaints procedures. Foster carers will be encouraged to help children make complaints or seek independent advice and support from advocates. All foster carers will have a safe caring policy in place which is reviewed each time a child joins the fostering household. Complaints against foster carers regarding standards of care will be robustly investigated and foster carers will receive support during this process. Timely action will be taken where a foster carer has clearly failed to maintain a good standard of care in placement.
- The fostering service will undertake at least one unannounced visit each year.
- Foster carers will promote positive behaviours and relationships and will not tolerate bullying or discrimination within the placement.
- Management of the behaviour of children in placements will be compliant with Tower Hamlet's behaviour management policy.
- The fostering service will ensure that all foster placements are



regularly visited to ensure that health and safety issues are being addressed and that foster homes provide a safe, secure and warm environment.

- Children's Social Care will provide a strong framework of policy and guidance for Looked After Children social work teams, the fostering service and foster carers.
- To ensure proper scrutiny of decision-making process, recommendations on the suitability of foster carers will be made by the independent fostering panel and other relevant matters may be referred to the panel by the fostering service as required.
- Foster carers will receive all relevant information about the child placed with them.
- Decisions on the care of the child that will be delegated to the carer will be agreed at the placement agreement meeting and recorded on the placement plan.

Management of the service

Tower Hamlets Council's fostering service is based at 160 Whitechapel Rd, London E1 1BJ and is located within Children's Social Care under the management of Susannah Beasley-Murray, Divisional Director of Children's Social Care. Fostering is part of the Children's Regulated Services and Resources Service, headed by Nji Oranu, Service Head.

Contact details for the divisional director and service manager are as follows:

- Susannah Beasley-Murray - Divisional Director, Children's Social Care Tel: 0207 364 2213 or email: susannah.beasley-murray@towerhamlets.gov.uk
- Nji Oranu – Head of Service, Regulated Services and Resources Tel: 0207 364 3464 or email: nji.oranu@towerhamlets.gov.uk

The service has a written plan, which details the proposed development of the service in line with national, council and service priorities and is reviewed annually.

There is a comprehensive health and safety policy for foster carers, children and staff which cover all legal requirements.

Staff and foster carers have a copy of policies and working practices in respect of grievances and disciplinary matters, details of services offered and an equal opportunities policy. Inspection reports are readily available and requests from Ofsted to supply data are complied with.

There is a written policy for keeping and retaining of case records and on storing and managing confidential information. All

electronic and paper records are securely stored. There is a procedure for keeping records about allegations and complaints and they are clearly recorded on files of staff, foster carers and children - including details of investigation, conclusion reached, and action taken.

All social workers in the fostering teams hold a first qualification in social work (CQSW/ DipSW) and have at least two years' post qualifying experience. All staff recruited to the service have undergone robust employment checks by Tower Hamlets' Human Resources Group to ensure they are suitable to work in the service. Staff are regularly supervised, and appraised and regular in-house training and post-qualification training is an expectation of the Directorate.

The fostering service social workers are split into recruitment and assessment social workers, who are responsible for the recruitment and assessment of all foster carers, and supervising social workers, who are responsible for monitoring and supporting foster carers once they have been approved.

All social workers in the fostering team have a multi-agency approach to their work and are committed to working in partnership with all professionals in order to ensure that children receive good quality care and that carers are provided with ongoing support through supervisory visits, training and workshops.

The Fostering Service consists of 3 team managers and 15 full time equivalent social workers.

Supervision, support and training of staff

Good quality regularly evaluated training programmes enhance skills and keep staff up to date with professional and legal developments. Fostering social workers receive induction; post-qualifying and in-service training and areas for development are identified in annual appraisals. As a learning environment, the Fostering Service encourages student placements. On a day-to-day level, staff have access to advice on medical, educational, childcare and legal issues.

Staff receive regular and ongoing supervision, which addresses accountability, the quality and timeliness of work undertaken and developmental needs. An annual appraisal reviews of social work progress and sets out a personal development plan. Written records are kept of supervisory discussions.

Social workers have knowledge of relevant legislation and current policies and procedures. They have knowledge of child development and an ability to promote equality, diversity and human rights. They are understanding of the roles of other agencies and work in partnership with health, education and the police as appropriate.

There are contingency plans in place to manage if there is a shortfall in staffing levels.

A written policy on case recording outlines the purpose, format and content of files and clarifies where different types of information are kept. The child's case record is recorded in a way which will be helpful to the child if they access their records in the future.



Service objectives

The Fostering Service assesses foster carer applicants and provides support to carers following approval at fostering panel.

Recruitment of foster carers

Recruitment of foster carers is overseen by Paula Lyttle, Team Manager of the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team. The team of 3 social workers and 2 support staff, are responsible for attracting potential applicants to become foster carers and completing in-depth assessments to evaluate prospective carers suitability. The team is also responsible for the assessment of friends and family foster carers, and private foster carers.

Email: paula.lyttle@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: 07958 170886

The team offers a daily duty service responding to new fostering enquiries arriving via our webpage, telephone calls or community events held throughout the year. To provide more consistency with our engagement with any enquiries, members of the team, work the enquiry desk a week at a time.

The fostering service has a recruitment strategy designed to attract prospective carers who are able to meet the identified needs of the children and young people who require placements in line with the council's statutory sufficiency duty.

To ensure a high quality of care in placement, Tower Hamlets has specific eligibility criteria that must be met by potential foster carers and their households before being accepted onto preparation training.

The service aims to have local carers who can meet the needs of Looked After Children and a sufficient pool of carers to match their ethnic, language and cultural needs. In addition to this, the strategy also aims to recruit specialist foster carers with professional experience and qualifications to offer placements to young people with more complex needs.

The service has a family finding coordinator and a community liaison officer who coordinate all recruitment campaigns and activities. A fostering website has been created to give potential foster carers information on fostering for Tower Hamlets Council and allows them to register their interest online.

The recruitment strategy uses statistical and current census information about the borough to target the recruitment drive to specific audiences using general local advertising, and via increased involvement with local community groups, places of worship and professional organisations within Tower Hamlets and its surrounding areas.

Tower Hamlets' fostering service has developed a range of materials to support the recruitment of foster carers, such as fostering recruitment packs, social media and a specific website which provides information on fostering and the assessment, support and training processes.

The assessment and approval process of foster carers

The fostering service completes assessments of prospective foster carers according to a two-stage assessment process. Our assessment process and

approval policy are in line with the changes made to the Fostering Regulations in July 2013 and is based on clear steps and regular review points to ensure timely decisions are made about whether or not to progress applicants to the next stage of assessment.

Stage 1 focuses on establishing the applicant's suitability to foster and includes collation of basic information and carrying out checks to ensure that they are not barred from being a foster carer and to inform any decision on continuing with the assessment process. We aim to complete this stage within 2 months, although this may not be possible if waiting for DBS checks.

Stage 2 involves the in-depth assessment of the applicant's relevant skills and knowledge to establish whether they can provide a high level of care to meet the needs of looked after children.

Although the two stages will often run concurrently, Stage 2 cannot be progressed unless a decision has been made following checks and information gathering carried out at Stage 1 indicating that the applicant and their household are suitable to foster. Under statutory guidance the assessment process must be completed within 8 months from the date the applicant first applies to be assessed to the date the case is presented to Panel, including taking out statutory checks and references.

The specific steps taken are:

- Initial enquiry: an initial discussion with the fostering recruitment social worker around eligibility and motivation to foster.
- Initial home visit: a short assessment where information is obtained about the applicant and their household.
- Skills to foster training: a three-day preparation and training group

which involves looking at the key elements of fostering based on the format designed by the Fostering Network but developed to meet Tower Hamlets' specific needs.

- Assessment: an in-depth assessment report using the CoramBAAF form F carried out over a period of about four months by an assessing social worker.
- Joint carers who share caring responsibilities will be assessed and approved together and single carers who form significant relationships will be expected to inform their social worker so that if the new partner will share caring responsibilities, they will be properly assessed.
- During the assessment, the assessing social worker and the applicant will work together to gather evidence of skills and knowledge of the fostering task, looking at the applicants' own life experience, childhood history, relationships and how they brought up their own children (if they have any).
- The report also includes references from people who know the applicant and a range of checks are undertaken on the suitability of the applicant and household members aged over 16. Checks taken out include enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and checks with the local authority where they reside. The report will be shared with applicants before being submitted to the Fostering Panel who will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision-Maker as to whether or not the applicants should be approved as foster carers and the age, number and gender of the children they can look after.

Stage 1 - If the decision is made during this stage not to progress with the enquiry then the applicant will be informed in writing within 10 days of this decision being made. At this point, if they do not agree with the decision, the applicant may follow the council's complaints procedure.

Stage 2 - If the decision is made during this stage not to progress, the applicant will be informed in writing of the decision. If they do not agree, they can make representation to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM).

The Permanence Panel

Tower Hamlets Council has a Permanence Panel which normally meets bi-monthly. It is an independent panel, set up to oversee the Tower Hamlets' fostering service as set out in the Children Act 1989, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Fostering Panel Advisor is Sharon Vickers who has responsibility for quality assuring reports presented to panels, provides guidance and expertise to practitioners and briefs the Decision Maker on panel matters.

Email:
sharon.vickers@towerhamlets.gov.uk

The panel's overall functions and purpose is to:

- To consider and make recommendations about the approval of prospective foster carers, including kinship carers who wish to be considered as long-term carers for a child they are currently looking after.
- The continuation of foster carer's approval terms at the first annual foster carer review and then at intervals of 3 years or as

determined by the Fostering Service.

- The termination of approval of foster carers.
- To consider and make recommendations about the proposed matches between children and long-term foster carers, and make recommendations on support plans.
- The panel provides a thorough and critical consideration of all cases presented to it in order to make sound and appropriate recommendations to the agency decision maker who makes the final decision.
- To consider and provide advice on any other issues affecting Tower Hamlets Council's Fostering Service.

The panel consists of a central list of panel members who have been recruited because they have the necessary experience and expertise to contribute effectively to the discharge of the panel functions. Tower Hamlets' panel aims to ensure that the panel reflects the diversity of the borough and includes representation from as wide a field as possible in terms of professional knowledge and experience of fostering.

The panel also works to ensure that panel membership is gender-balanced and reflects the ethnic and cultural composition of Tower Hamlets as much as possible. The Head of Service (Regulated Services and Children's Resources) makes the final decision as Tower Hamlets' agency decision maker.

All foster carers must have an annual review to ensure they remain suitable to foster and the panel considers the following reviews:

- the first annual review for all carers
- every third annual review for mainstream carers
- any reviews where there are care standards or child protection concerns
- any reviews where there has been a major change in the foster carer's circumstances.
- Supervising social workers are responsible for preparing reports for the foster carer's review and presenting this at panel. For mainstream carers, reviews that are not presented to panel will be decided on by the Head of Service for Resources.

Foster carers' terms of approval may be changed after a review by the agency decision maker and the foster carer has 28 days' notice to agree or appeal about this change to the agency decision maker or the Independent Review Mechanism.

A decision to change a foster carer's terms of approval can be implemented immediately if the foster carer provides written agreement to the change and there is a written statement concerning the foster family's support needs.

Joint training is held with panel members, social workers and foster carers.

Supervision, support and training of foster carers

The Fostering Team supports foster carers including family and friends foster carers and liaise with the child's social worker to provide quality care to children looked after by Tower Hamlets council. The team's aim is to assist all foster carers in fully meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering.

There are two team managers who each manage a team of 6 supervising social workers.

June Hosein is the Team Manager of Fostering Development Team 1

Email: june.hosein@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: 07923 242092

Iris Amoah is the Team Manager of Fostering Development Team 2

Email: iris.amoah@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: 0745 245105

Supervision

Each foster carer is allocated and meets regularly with a supervising social worker (SSW), who provides individualised emotional and practical support. The SSW undertakes home visits, telephone calls, attendance at meetings and looked after children reviews to ensure that children are provided with a safe and nurturing environment.

There is at least one unannounced visit per year. Written records are kept of these meetings.

There is an annual review of the foster carer, which includes the views of the foster child in placement, to establish whether the carers are still able to provide at least the level of care specified by the National Minimum Standards and to complete their professional development plan.

Foster carers, household members and looked after children are also invited to give their views about working with the department. The meeting is chaired by an independent reviewing officer, who submits a written report. The review documentation is presented to the Fostering Panel where it is the first or

every third review or where there has been a change of circumstances or an allegation. Otherwise, the review can be signed off by the Head of Service Foster carers are notified in writing of the outcome of the panel.

The role of the SSW is to offer supervision and support to increase competencies and skills, including ensuring the completion of a portfolio undertaken by the foster carer to demonstrate their ability to comply with the Training, Support and Development Standards for foster carers within 12 months of approval. Additional support is offered by supervising social workers via regular TSDs workshops.

Support is also available from the Emergency Duty Team, outside office hours. Foster carers are given a copy of the Foster Carers' Handbook as a reference guide to relevant policies, procedures, and guidance, legal, financial and insurance information.

Support groups

Foster carers are encouraged to attend monthly support groups, which enable them to share experiences of fostering. The department publishes newsletters for foster carers and for family and friends carers on a periodic basis.

It is understood that fostering has an impact on the sons and daughters of foster carers and that they also need support. The supervising social worker will also ensure their views and feelings are sought.

Training programme

There is a comprehensive and annually evaluated programme of training for foster carers, which begins with pre-approval and induction training. Ongoing training includes both compulsory and optional courses. The content is devised with the

needs of foster carers in mind, for instance, specific training for male foster carers about safer caring. Convenient training times and venues are chosen, and reasonable expenses are reimbursed. As foster carers become more experienced, they are encouraged to undertake more advanced training. Carers with suggestions for the training programme or who want a copy of the latest brochure can contact the Fostering Training Development Co-ordinator on 020 7364 2173, or by email: hilary.cheyne@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

The Fostering Development Co-ordinator works with supervising social workers to support the professional development of foster carers, including the completion of a portfolio demonstrating their ability to meet the Training, Support and Development standards.

Existing foster carers are involved in the pre-approval training and each successful applicant is allocated a mentor who is an experienced foster carer and able to give them additional guidance in the first months of their fostering career. Equality and diversity issues are integrated into all training courses.

Termination of Approval

If a foster carer makes the decision to stop fostering for Tower Hamlets, they are encouraged to submit their decision in writing and their approval will be terminated 28 days from the date of the written decision. Their approval will be formally noted by the Fostering Panel and their name removed from Tower Hamlet's Foster Carers register.

Should Tower Hamlets Fostering Service consider that a fostering household is no longer suitable to meet the requirements to be an approved foster carer, the Fostering Service will refer the matter for consideration to the Permanency Panel.

The Panel will hear information made available by the Fostering Service and the foster carer and make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.

Tower Hamlets policies and procedures detail the process to be followed allowing the foster carer to make full representation to the panel or the national Independent Review Mechanism, if the foster carer is not in agreement with the decision to terminate their approval.

Fees and allowances

Carers are given a weekly allowance based on the age of the children they care for and a tier system dependent on the training they achieved.

For full details on the payment structure, contact Philip Morgan via email: Phil.morgan@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Other support provided

- Additional support is provided through the provision of insurance cover and all necessary bedroom furniture and bedding.
- Where difficulties arise outside of office hours, there is a dedicated Children's Services Out of Hours Team.
- All foster carers have access to the fostering handbook.
- There is an active Foster Carers Association that the department supports, funds, and consults with regularly. Foster carers and children can take part in outings and events.
- All foster carers receive free membership to the Fostering Network.
- The team operates a mentoring scheme to help support newly approved carers and for any other carer who needs support.
- The fostering team are committed to fully implementing the

Mockingbird Family Model. Currently, there are two constellations established which are providing support to around 20 families.

- Foster carers are encouraged and supported to offer staying put arrangements to young people who wish to remain in placement post 18.

The fostering service holds an annual fostering awards ceremony to reward the borough's foster carers for long service, completed training and where carers have gone the extra mile in supporting children. The team also produces a newsletter that goes out to all Tower Hamlets foster carers.

Fostering Therapeutic Service

The fostering service benefits from having two dedicated clinical psychologists providing invaluable support such as training and individual support sessions. Carers learn how therapeutic parenting can help transform children's lives by understanding how traumatic experiences impact on a child's development and behaviours and what plans can be put in place to help.

The service provides a range of support and training including:

- A 6-week training in Attachment and Therapeutic Parenting
- Support to foster carers on Self Care and Mindfulness as part of support group
- Monthly 'Skills to Foster' Programme for prospective foster carers on Attachment and Therapeutic Parenting
- Consultations to Assessing and Supervising social workers

Placement commissioning

The Children's Placements Team constitutes a single point of referral for advice on all placement issues regarding children aged 0-17. To provide this service they keep current information on:

- A wide range of placement resources - including in-house foster and residential care as well as services in the independent sector
- Services which provide alternatives to a child becoming looked after

Tower Hamlets has a range of approved external providers who offer value for money and a high-quality service and are accessed through the Pan London Contract.

For social workers there is a 'one stop shop' approach to accessing resources. Once clear about the service or funding requested, Children's Placements Team commit to responding with a progress report within office hours on the same day as the initial referral.

Placements with in-house foster carers are made in consultation with the Fostering Team.

Payments in relation to looked after children are authorised, certified, recorded and administered through the Children's Placements Team, including those to in-house carers and external providers.

For further information regarding the team, contact the team manager by email: gifty.green@towerhamlets.gov.uk. For financial matters, please contact Philip Morgan at phil.morgan@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Permanency and Support Team

The Permanency Assessment and Support Team provide additional support to the fostering service including fostering assessments, undertaking connected persons assessments to support the permanency of children with their family and friends foster carers.

There are two team managers. Casey Guilbeau is team manager of Permanency Assessment and Support Team 1. 5 social workers

Email: casey.guilbeau@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: 07947599281

Silvius Brasville is team manager of Permanency Assessment and Support Team 2. 5 social workers

Email: Silvius.brasville@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Tel: 07908440665



Complaints

At Tower Hamlets Council we aim to provide the best possible service. If a service user, or someone planning to use our service, is unhappy with any aspect of our service or a decision we make, they can make a complaint. This is important as it helps us to improve our services.

It is the responsibility of the staff and their managers based in the fostering teams to try to put right any concerns raised by service users when a problem first arises. This local resolution is the first stage of the complaints process.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the first stage, it may be necessary for it to progress to stage two, where it is formally investigated. Service users have a right to go straight to this stage of the process if they wish.

If the complaint is still unresolved after the formal investigation at stage two, a Review Panel may be requested, which is chaired by an independent person. This is stage three of the process.

If a child or young person makes a complaint about services provided for them, then the Children Act complaints procedure must be followed. In this event, a child or young person involved in the complaint will be entitled to an advocate to support and represent them in the process.

For complaints about Children's Service, such as child social care and child protection, use our online children's social care complaints form.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/complaints

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

The Independent Review Mechanism is a review process which prospective or existing foster carers can access when they do not agree with the qualifying determination given to them by their fostering service provider and therefore challenge the decision made not to approve the applicant to foster. The review process is conducted by an independent review panel.

independentreviewmechanism.org.uk

The Independent Review Mechanism
Unit 4, Pavilion Business Park
Royds Hall Road, Wortley
Leeds LS12 6AJ

Tel: 0113 202 2080 / 0845 450 3956
Email: irm@baaf.org.uk

Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity and membership organisation offering support to those who foster, aims to improve opportunities for fostered children and young people and provides expert guidance to all fostering services.

thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Fostering Network
87 Blackfriars Road
London, SE1 8HA

Tel: 020 7620 6400
Email: info@fostering.net

Ofsted

Tower Hamlets' fostering service is regulated by Ofsted and is subject to inspections. Inspection reports can be obtained from Ofsted's website.

You can also share concerns about children's social care services with Ofsted, including whistleblowing.

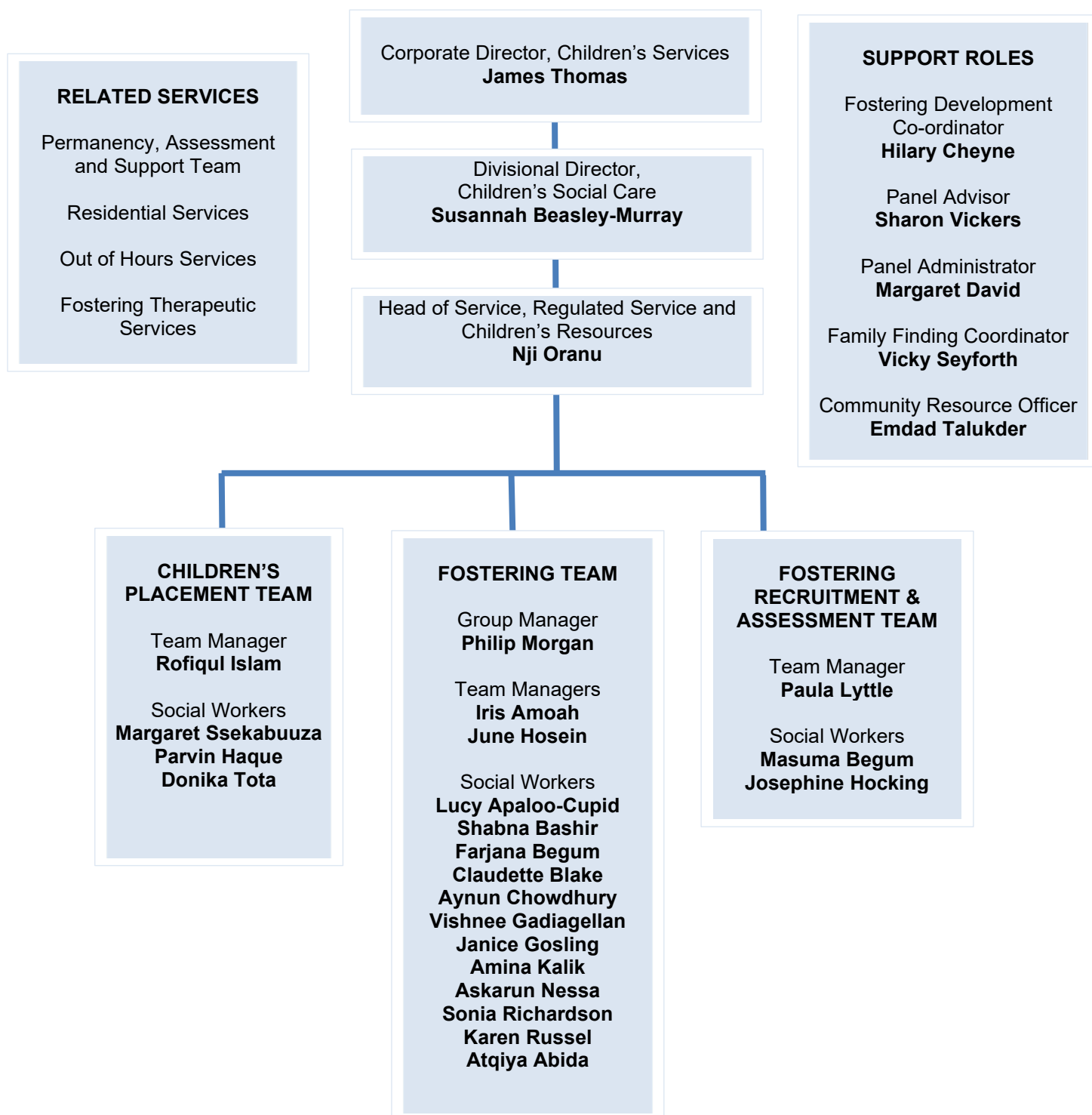
Complaints procedure - Ofsted - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 1231

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD



Service Structure



0207 364 1246

www.fosteringtowerhamlets.co.uk

