

**London Borough of Waltham Forest
Families and Homes Services**

Corporate Parenting, Placements

**FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF
PURPOSE**

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1. Introduction

The Statement of Purpose is a requirement of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

The Fostering Service's policies, procedures and written guidelines accurately reflect the process listed in this Statement of Purpose. All members of staff and Foster carers can access a copy of the Statement from the Council's website.

2. Aims and Objectives of Children and Young People Services

The London Borough of Waltham Forest is committed to providing excellent standards of care to Looked After Children by maximising their life chances and helping them to enjoy stable and permanent relationships with significant adults.

The Council expects that its Fostering Service will work in partnership with all agencies and staff involved in the planning and care of Looked After Children, including Health and Education. Waltham Forest also works with voluntary agencies and other local authorities in the Fostering consortium. Our objective is to fully develop the corporate parenting role and to realise our commitment to achieving positive outcomes for children in public care.

The Fostering Service recruits, assesses, prepares, trains and supports foster carers, including Friends and Family (connected Persons) foster carers. The Service aims to provide foster placements for all Looked After Children in Waltham Forest and maintains the Register of all London Borough of Waltham Forest approved foster carers.

2.1 Equality

- i. Every effort must be made to place children within their own cultural, racial, linguistic and religious communities. Where this is not possible, plans must be put in place to positively promote these areas of a child's identity and keep the child's culture alive for them.
- ii. Children who are looked after by Waltham Forest must be given the opportunity to develop a positive identity and high self-esteem. Within service provision, children will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, age, gender, sexuality, disability or social class.
- iii. Children with disabilities must be placed in an environment that recognises and caters for their disability, and at the same time promotes their social inclusion.
- iv. The disadvantages experienced by Looked After Children must be recognised and appropriate Care Plans created for them which address their needs – for example, education support, promotion of good health, mental health provision and leisure opportunities. This is fully explored with foster carers, addressed at the matching stage and reflected in children's care plans.
- v. Waltham Forest is a widely diverse community. The differences in child rearing practices, family values and attitudes across the different spectrums of racial, cultural, religious and social classes living in the Borough, must be respected and understood.

3. Core Values

3.1 The Child's Welfare

The welfare of the child will always be paramount.

3.2 Participation of the Child

The child must be encouraged and supported to participate in decisions that affect their life insofar as this is consistent with their age and understanding. The fostering service will take steps to include the voice of the child in decision making about their lives and also to incorporate those views in service planning and development.

3.3 Partnership with Parents and Family

Parents with parental responsibility and significant adults in the child's life must be assisted to properly participate in the planning and decision-making processes concerned with their child's future. They must be properly informed and consulted and their wishes ascertained and respected.

NB: Whilst parents retain parental responsibility, the exercise of this and input of other family members may be limited as a result of court imposed limitations or decisions taken by the local authority in the exercise of its duties to those children for whom it has assumed legal responsibility. Such decisions must be based primarily on the welfare of the child and not the needs of the adults. Authority for the delegation of day to day decisions for children will be given to foster carers. The specific delegation will be discussed in Placement Planning Meetings and reviewed regularly against the principle that children are entitled to ordinary family life unless specific concerns and risks are present.

3.4 Maintaining Contact with Birth Families

Insofar as it is consistent with their welfare, every effort must be made to ensure that the child maintains an appropriate level and type of contact with their birth family and community.

3.5 Responsibilities Towards Looked After Children

Under the Fostering Services Regulations 2015 and the National Minimum Standards, the authority has the responsibility to provide a Fostering Service to children and their families and, where children cannot remain in their families, to provide accommodation. Where children cannot return to their family of origin, permanent alternative care must be identified. In the first instance, every effort should be made to maintain the child in its own birth family and/or community network.

Looked After Children should not be disadvantaged by that status and the local authority must act as a good parent by ensuring that the child has a high standard of care, opportunities and life chances.

3.6 Children's Rights

Children must be made aware of their rights as Looked After Children and have information that allows them to make representations and complaints where necessary.

4. Commissioning Placements

The Placements Service in Waltham Forest consists of a Deputy manager (no social work **qualification**) who manages three Placements Officers, one of which holds a social worker qualification. The Placements team match children's needs to the abilities and experience of foster carers to achieve placement stability.

4.1 Our Aims

- To provide safe, healthy, high quality family care, where physical and emotional needs of children will be met.
- To carefully match children and young people with foster carers in the first instance. Where a child's needs require more specialist residential care, to work with the private and voluntary sector to appropriately provide for those needs. This includes working closely with our colleagues within Integrated Disabled Children's Services.

4.2 Placement Types

- Short term placements – these placements, which include 'emergency placements' can last for a few days, weeks or months, whilst plans are made for the child's future.
- Long term through to adulthood – these placements are those in which the foster carer cares for the child/young person until adulthood.
- Parent and child placements – these placements support the parent to care for their child alongside the plans from the local authority.
- Remand placements – these placements provide substitute care for those young people remanded to care by the Court.
- Placements for children with complex health needs.
- Specialist placements for children with foster carers who have the relevant experience and skills to meet their specific and often complex needs.

4.3 Other Services

The team provide a number of other services on behalf of children & young people:

- The manager is in regular and frequent communication with the Voice and Influence team to inform service provision, seek and provide feedback.
- Chair Transfer Protocol meetings for external foster carers wishing to transfer agencies.
- Where necessary attend Standards of Care meetings, placement assessment meetings and placement planning meetings.

- Host and update placement Update Group list

Carry out joint unannounced checks with colleagues from Contract monitoring service to semi-Independent providers to ensure high quality of service is provided to young people at all times.

- The team deal with financial matters relating to placements and children and young people's savings.
- Work with our colleagues in Commissioning in relation to the monitoring of external providers.
- Attend provider's forums.
- Provide verbal and written monthly placement updates to the Director
- Maintain good record of all placement search activities and provide a chronology to the Court when required
 - Attend and contribute to the Residential Mobilisation project
- Meet quarterly with the Waltham Forest Foster Carers Association, working closely with them, seeking and providing feedback to inform service provision.
- Develop policies, procedures and protocols for the service area.

5. Fostering Service Objectives

1. To provide a comprehensive, high quality Fostering Service to Waltham Forest's residents which is sensitive to the needs of all, recognises differences and is reflective of ethnic origin, culture, faith, gender, disability, economic position and sexual orientation.
2. To provide information, advice and guidance to those wishing to foster and to children and young people and their families using the service in Waltham Forest.
3. To actively recruit families for children in Waltham Forest needing long term fostering.
4. To provide support to all those involved in Fostering. This includes children and families who need support when children are in care.
5. To provide open services which encourage and enable consultation with our service users.
6. To be accessible and accountable for all our work.

6. Services for Children Requiring Foster Placements

6.1 Process of Referral

The work with children looked after by Waltham Forest's Children's Services is undertaken by social workers based in the Referral and Assessment, Safeguarding and Family Support, Children in Care, Fostering and Permanence social work teams, all of

which are based at Sycamore House in central Walthamstow. Specialist workers in the Integrated Disabled Children's Services also undertake this work and they are based off-site in a multi-disciplinary team.

As far as is safe and practical, children are maintained within their family of origin. Where this is no longer possible and a decision is made for the child to become looked after by the local authority, alternative carers need to be identified. The social worker will first look within the child's family and friends network to see if there is anyone known to the child who is suitable and able to take care of them. The worker has to explore all potential family members and will only consider foster care with stranger carers if all potential family carers are deemed as unsuitable to provide care.

Where family or friends are not able to care for the child, the child's social worker must complete a placement request form giving details of the child and their situation. In some cases assessments of family members are in the process of being completed or will need to be undertaken. When there are no other alternatives and fostering is considered as part of the Care Plan, a referral is made to the Placement Team within the Corporate Parenting Service.

The referral information helps the Placement Team to find the right foster family or placement for the child. It also assists the team in planning a recruitment strategy that best meets the needs of Looked After Children in the Borough.

6.2 Matching Children and Families

All short term placements are made via the Placement Team. They will use the child's referral information, consider the wishes and feelings of the child and their birth family and try to identify suitable foster families. For example, in the right location to get the child to school, where contact can be facilitated and where possible, match the cultural and religious needs of the child. They first look at in-house foster carers. If there is not a suitable match, the Placements manager will seek permission to do a search with Independent Fostering Agencies, who are contracted through the North and East London Framework Contract or who have been Pan London approved or spot purchase if necessary.

When a potential family is identified, information about the family or families will be given to child's social worker and manager for them to make the decision about which family to use. Where the placement is not required in an emergency, arrangements will be made with the child/young person and foster carer to arrange a planned move where the child can visit and get to know the family prior to moving in.

The Placement Team also support Family Finding Social Workers by identifying potential carers for children and young people who may need long term/permanent placements. Where there have been placement break downs, the Placements Team will also support in finding a suitable family. In both of these situations more detailed information is required including care plans and child permanence reports. There is also a more formal matching process.

Some of the children referred may later need adoption placements. Again, these children have a Family Finding Social Worker who as a result of the Regionalisation Adoption Agency (RAA) will be Coram employed but will be based at sycamore house and will work closely with the social work Team in family finding and matching. The adoption family finder will be different from the other family finders who will remain employed by LB WF and will continue to be part of the Corporate parenting social

work teams., the Corporate Parenting family finders will also work with those children where other permanency options are identified in the child's care plan such as special guardianship or Connected Persons fostering arrangements. Where appropriate, and with Court's permission, Children's Services establish a contingency or

parallel plan for children to try and avoid any unnecessary delay. It is the responsibility of the Family Finding Social Worker to oversee this.

The Corporate Parenting Placements Service undertakes all recruitment and support of Foster carers. The recruitment of Foster carers is reviewed regularly (bi-monthly and annually) to properly reflect the needs of the children requiring placements. Waltham Forest has a dedicated Marketing and recruitment manager, and two recruitment workers and one stage one worker to ensure that all fostering enquires are prioritised and followed up accordingly. Waltham Forest is involved in joint training and development of Foster carers and in joint recruitment activities. It also works with the digital and insight teams as well as the Communication and Events team to ensure and draw focus to targeted recruitment.

7. Staying Put

Waltham Forest provides supportive placements for young people who have lived with foster carers and Parent and Child placements who are not ready to live completely independently, but are now adults. Staying Put arrangements are legislatively created under The Children and Families Act 2014. The aim of the service is to provide a safe supportive environment and opportunity for young people to develop the practical skills and emotional stability they will need to make the transition to adulthood and make a success of independent living.

The young people are provided with individualised programmes (Pathway Plan) to meet their individual needs. Part of the carer's role is to work jointly with the young person's social worker or Leaving Care Coach to ensure:

- Education; attending further education, career or apprentice schemes.
- Health; registering with a doctor and dentist.
- Sex education including contraception and preparing for parenthood.
- Safety in the home and first aid.
- Shopping, preparing food to achieve a balanced diet and shopping on a low income.
- Knowledge of emergency services and how to summon help.
- Household budgeting, regular payment of bills and avoiding credit.
- Household maintenance and general housekeeping.
- Applying for housing and sustaining tenancies.
- Job applications and interviews.
- Contacting social services and other community based agencies.
- Seeking advice and making a complaint.
- Citizenship.
- Contacting support groups and agencies specialising in working with young people in

care.

8. Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Foster Care

Children may be brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who are connected with them for a variety of reasons and in a range of different arrangements.

Family and friends carers play a unique role in enabling children and young people to remain with people they know and trust if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents. Family and friends often start to care for other people's children in a crisis or emergency situation. These children may or may not be looked after by the local authority. The majority of the relatives who provide care are grandparents, aunts and uncles and older siblings.

The key principle of the Children Act 1989 is that children should be enabled to live within their families unless this is not consistent with their welfare.

The LB Waltham Forest will not interfere with informal care arrangements which meet legal requirements unless there is a request for services or where there are safeguarding concerns.

The LB Waltham Forest promotes permanence for children by seeking to enable those who cannot live with their parents to remain with members of their extended family or friends, providing where appropriate, a better alternative to growing up in the care of the local authority.

Children are active participants and their wishes and feelings will be sought and taken into account when making plans for them.

Where a child cannot be cared for within his or her immediate family, the family may make their own arrangements to care for the child within the family and friends network.

The Local Authority will not normally be involved in most informal family and friends arrangements unless it is necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child in need living in the area of the LB Waltham Forest.

The definition of a child in need in section 17(10) of Children Act 1989 is broad. A child in need is a child whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or their health or development would be significantly impaired without the provision of services by the local authority, or they are disabled.

Where this is the case then a joint viability assessment will be completed by a children's social worker and a member of Permanence Teams.

Where a child is looked after by the local authority we have a responsibility wherever possible to make arrangements for the child to live with a member of the family who is approved as a foster carer (Section 22 of the Children Act 1989). LB Waltham Forest recognises that a child's needs are best met by a nurturing family and is committed to placing children who are not able to remain in their own family in an appropriate alternative family placement wherever possible. As highlighted above, the priority will be for children to be placed with family or friends under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning Regulations where this placement is deemed suitable following a schedule 4 assessment, approved by the Assistant Director for the Children Services, who is the

lead person responsible for ensuring LB Waltham Forest children are well cared for in Friends and Family placements.

8.1 Expectations of a Family and Friends Carer

Prospective foster carers will be considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meets their developmental needs. In considering whether a relative, friend or other connected person should be approved as a foster carer, account must be taken of the needs, wishes and feelings of the child whom it is proposed to place with them and the capacity of the carer to meet those particular needs. The assessment will balance the strengths of the carers arising from their position within the family network against any aspects which may make them less suitable. The carer's past experiences of parenting or caring for children will be assessed as part of a fuller picture of their capacity to care for the child.

Once approved as foster carers, they will be allocated a supervising fostering Social Worker from the fostering service to provide them with support and supervision; and they will receive fostering allowances for as long as they care for the child as a foster carer. While the child remains a looked after child, as a foster carer, they will be expected to cooperate with all the processes that are in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care and support, for example, contributing to reviews of the child's Care Plan, working with professionals, cooperating with the child's social worker, promoting the child's education and health needs and attending their own training provided by the Borough to ensure they are able to deliver the most appropriate level of care.

The assessment and approval process for family and friends who apply to be Connected Persons foster carers for a specific Looked After child will be the same as for any other foster carer, except that the timescales for the assessment are different where a child is already in the placement. In all other respects the requirements are the same as for any potential foster carers and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering apply, in particular Standard 30 which refers directly to Connected Persons foster carers. A leaflet explaining the assessment process and the requirements of Connected Persons Foster carers will be available to potential foster carers and a social worker from Placements Services will be allocated to carry out the assessment.

The child can be placed with family members prior to such approval, subject to an assessment of the placement (Schedule 4), and temporary approval being given for up to 16 weeks. This temporary approval can be extended for a further 8 weeks in exceptional circumstances.

9. Fostering to Adopt

Fostering to adopt is a form of fostering and adoption for children in care who are likely to be adopted but who still have a possibility of being reunited with their birth family. Fostering to adopt is a better option for the child as it prevents them from being placed with temporary foster carers before moving to a permanent placement with an adoptive family, minimising disruption for the child.

Children are placed at the earliest opportunity with specially-trained foster carers, who are also approved to adopt. The child remains with the foster carers while their birth parent(s) and extended families, who often have severe difficulties and issues in their lives, are rigorously and intensely assessed to see whether the child can be returned to them. In the event that these assessments are not positive the child remains with the

foster carers who then proceed to adopt the child once the court has given permission for the child to be adopted.

The Fostering Service, in partnership with the RAA Adoption Service, seeks to recruit, assess, prepare, train and support fostering to adopt carers. Potential carers will complete the standard adoption preparation and subsequent Fostering to Adopt Preparation. Preparation will encourage and support foster carers and their families who are considering this option.

9.1 Dual Approval

Prior to having a child placed in the home, the foster carer must meet the requirements for approval of both the fostering service and the adoption service (dual approval). Living with their dually approved carers as early as possible means the child has a greater chance of stability and of forming secure relationships and attachments, even though there is uncertainty about their future.

As a concurrent carer you will be approved for both fostering and adoption and will receive tailored training and support for this particular role by the RAA. The relevant workers will discuss with you your motivation, resilience, support networks and ability to manage this specialist task. You will receive guidance and support from your social worker throughout the process and you will also be entitled to a fostering allowance until the placement becomes one of adoption or the child is returned to the birth family.

10. Services for Foster carers

10.1 Recruitment

Advertising campaigns are conducted for general recruitment of Foster carers including carers that can care for children with additional needs, and short break carers. A recruitment strategy is agreed each year based on the needs of the department, analysis of the previous year's marketing and recruitment and lessons learnt.

The criteria for recruitment are kept under review depending on the needs of the children on referral.

As mentioned earlier, systems are in place to respond promptly to enquiries. Everyone interested in Fostering for Waltham Forest is sent an information pack and is invited to the next monthly Information Evening.

Initial appointment home visits are offered to all applicants meeting the criteria. Fostering Social Workers discuss the outcome of these appointments with the manager and in Practice supervision group P (PSG) and a decision is made whether to invite the applicant to submit their application and attend the next preparation group.

10.2 Preparation and Training

Applicants are invited to a preparation course which uses the 'CoramBAAF Skills to Foster model' and associated materials and workbooks.

Following an evaluation of their attendance and participation at the end of the course, a decision is made about continuing with their assessment.

There are 6 courses run each year. The Fostering Service works with Fostering Consortium colleagues to share places on courses to provide a range of times for applicants to attend. We can provide places on our courses to other agencies as well as obtaining places for our families from other agencies. This is a reciprocal non-fee paying arrangement between Local Authority consortia members.

It is a requirement that all prospective Foster carers have completed a preparation course before they can be taken to the Fostering Panel for consideration.

If we are unable to provide a place on a course in a reasonable time, we will consider beginning the assessment and the applicants completing the course during the assessment process. We do however prefer the training to have been completed first.

10.3 Assessment

Looking after someone else's children is a challenging responsibility. It is not something everyone can do. Prospective carers need to know more about fostering and its implications for their family, what support we provide and what more we want to learn about them.

Foster carers assessments are completed using the CoramBAAF Prospective Foster Carers Report Template. Assessments are normally completed within six – eight months from receipt of the formal application and are taken to panel for consideration for approval. We encourage applicants to think about what they have to offer in terms of their personal experience, faith, culture, ethnic origin, knowledge and skills gained throughout their lives. If there are areas that need development we work with them to explore ways of adding to their competencies. We therefore have an open and inclusive approach in evaluating what applicants have to offer.

We require that applicants have sufficient time and space to meet the demands of fostering. All applicants are encouraged to think carefully about their support networks - including family - and single sex households are asked to consider who will provide role models for a different gender to them.

Applicants are given their report to read and comment on and are then asked to sign it. They are encouraged to add to it if they wish. They are later invited to attend the Fostering Panel when the approval is being considered.

All Foster carers, once approved, have an allocated Supervising Social Worker in most cases the same supervising social worker who carried out the Form F assessment will continue to support the foster carer, this helps to ensure consistency and strengthen professional relationship between the foster carer and the supervising social worker.. Once approved this worker helps them consider children for a match, where the placement can be planned, and works jointly with the child's social worker when they are linked.

11. Fostering and Adoption Panel

The London Borough of Waltham Forest's Adoption and Fostering Panel meets twice a month on the first and third Friday. The Panel makes recommendations concerning the approval of Adopters and Foster carers, including friend and relative carers. The Panel considers information on revisions to Foster carers approval terms and terminations of approval and resignations. The panel also considers the first annual household review of every Foster Carer and then at not more than three yearly intervals. However, where

there has been a significant event or change of circumstance the Panel will consider this

sooner. The Panel has the capacity to arrange extra panels to avoid any unnecessary delay.

In March 2016, the Government announced changes to the delivery of adoptions services setting out clear direction that all local authorities' adoptions service must be delivered on a regional basis by 2020. This policy was reaffirmed following the election and the DFE have commenced the legislation that allows them to direct local authorities into a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA).

London Borough of Harrow submitted expression of interest to the DFE as the lead LA and other LA partners including Redbridge, City of London, Bromley, Slough Children's trust joined by signing up and London Borough of Waltham Forest joined by agreement on 11th January 2019. The RAA partnership received ministerial approval and grant award decision in February 2019 and the financial project plan was subsequently approved to start in April 2019 by DFE.

As such, Ambitious for Adoption is a VAA commissioned RAA with the London Borough of Harrow as lead for all participating LAs.

This development will therefore bring about changes to current panel structure as the adoption elements of the panel will be transferred to the RAA. Transition plan for this to happen is envisaged to be smooth and should cause minimal or no disruption to the function and activities of fostering panel.

Panel membership complies with the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, as amended by subsequent regulations in 2013, 2014 and 2015; an independent member chairs the panel.

There is an Agency Adviser that serves the Fostering. The Adviser feeds back to senior management issues raised by the Panel concerning practice and procedures. The Adviser and Panel Chair meet bi-annually with the Fostering Service with the aim of practice improvement.

The Agency Decision Maker is the Divisional Director. They meet quarterly with the panel chair to discuss any issues arising from panel recommendations and to gain an overview of the panel's functioning.

Annual training is provided for panel members and this includes the Fostering Teams.

12. Fostering Support Services

The National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Foster Care published by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2015 emphasises the important part played by the foster carers of both statutory fostering services and independent fostering agencies. The majority of children and young people in public care live with foster carers.

We recognise the difficulties and challenges associated with fostering children. To this end we are committed to supporting carers through the following:

- We provide 4-6 weekly supervision visits to Foster carers or more frequently if required or requested.
- We run support groups on a monthly basis both during the day and in the evening, to ensure the widest participation.

- We recognise the commitment and hard work that foster carers provide in caring for children, with an annual gift to all households.
- We have a skills payment, in addition to the fostering allowance, for all approved carers. These are made by weekly payments.
- We review all payment levels to carers on an annual basis.
- We ensure that all foster carers are working towards the Training Support and Development standards and we run a full and varied training programme which includes the 'Fostering Changes' programme. The programme involves weekday, weekend and evening options for courses, online training and also includes the use of DVDs for those carers unable to attend.
- We hold an annual seminar for Foster Carers which consists of a presentation on a current subject and workshops to enable Foster Carer participation.
- We support our local foster carer's association 'Waltham Forest Foster carers Association (WFFCA)'.

- We provide 24 hours telephone support to carers, running an out of hours fostering advice line which operates until midnight and then the Emergency Duty Team after this time.
- We have the availability of a 'Fast Track' service from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to carers and children which guarantees an appointment without a waiting list or delay.
- Access to health advice from a dedicated Looked After Children's nurse.
- Access to education advice from the Virtual School.
- Duty Officer support during the day and by telephone at evenings and weekends.
- Insurance against damage to a foster carer's home.
- Legal expenses insurance via Fostering Network.
- Membership of Fostering Network for all our foster carers.
- Access to the fostering forum – an intranet system for our Foster carers, providing instant access to information, training programmes and a forum for carers to ask questions, seek advice and support and share their knowledge about fostering.

13. Duty Service

A Fostering Duty Service is provided Monday – Thursday 9:00am – 5:15pm and Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm. This is a telephone service where Social workers give general advice to the public, approved carers that cannot contact their allocated Social Worker, and workers in the department about fostering. Duty also provides the first response to general advertisements to recruit carers when the recruitment line staff are busy. Initial visits to enquirers are arranged on a duty basis.

There is a fostering support service outside these hours operating from 5:15pm to 12midnight. This is staffed by supervising social workers and deals with any issues from foster carers and their families about foster children in their care.

After 12midnight the general Emergency Duty Team is available to foster carers.

14. Friends and Family Foster Care

The principle aims, objectives and core values of the Fostering Service apply to all Family and Friends foster carers.

A Fostering Assessment or Permanence Team Social Worker undertakes the full assessment of Family and Friends Carers whether the child has already temporarily been placed or the plan for the child is to live with Family and Friends carers either in the short or longer term.

In seeking to support Family and Friends foster carers the Fostering Assessment or Permanence Team works closely with the wider local authority Children's Services

department. It also works with other departments and agencies to mitigate any limitations to careers' capacity to care for a foster child.

14.1 Assessment

Potential Family and Friends foster carers will be provided with information about the assessment process so that they know what is expected of them and how they will be assessed. This includes the criteria that will be used, how particular issues for Family and Friends foster carers will be addressed and any support to be offered during the assessment process.

When assessing an individual's suitability to be a Family and Friends foster carer the likely length of the placement, the age of the child and, if appropriate, the capacity of the wider family to contribute to the child's long term care, are taken into account.

Family and Friends foster carers are asked about their existing knowledge of the foster child's background, current needs and any concerns they have about the child, as well as being provided with information about the child that is held by the service.

The child's introduction to the new fostering arrangement takes account of the fact that whilst the child may know the carer well, the carer's role in the child's life is now changing. This is explained to the child, and the carer is provided with the support they need to manage the transition.

Family and Friends assessments are completed using the CoramBAAF Form C. For children who have already been temporarily placed this must be completed within 16 weeks with the possible agreement via the Panel process to extend this to a further 8 weeks. For those children not yet living with their family and friends carer, a full assessment will be completed prior to placing the child.

The approval and review of foster carers as outlined above applies equally to Family and Friends Foster carers. However, there are a number of areas that must be considered which are particular to this group of carers. This is outlined within the Waltham Forest Family and Friends policy and procedures.

14.2 Support and Training

Financial and other support is provided to all foster carers according to objective criteria that do not discriminate against foster carers that have a pre-existing relationship with the child. Family and Friends carers may require some services to be delivered in a different way, but there will be equality of provision and entitlement. Fully approved family and friends foster carers are provided with the fostering allowance and fee to support them in the care of the child.

Family and Friends foster carers have access to support groups that meet their particular needs.

Family and Friends foster carers have access to all training available to other foster carers. There is an expectation that, once fully approved, they attend core training and complete their Training and Development Standards within 18 months, with the support of their supervising social worker.

Family and Friends foster carers come to fostering not so much to become professional foster carers but because they want to make sure that the children in their care remain

within their extended family. Their development needs therefore are likely to be different to those of other foster carers and whilst our training for foster carers is offered to all Family and Friend carers, this will be adapted where necessary to meet the needs of this group.

In recognition of their particular circumstances, Family and Friends carers who are approved as foster carers have an extended period in which to complete the Training, Support and Development Standards, this being within 18 months of their approval.

During the assessment process and post-approval, the Family and Friends carer has the continued support of a Social worker, originally from the Assessment or Permanence Team and then from the Fostering Support team once approved.

15. Foster Carers' Charter

Waltham Forest's Foster Carer Charter outlines our commitment to children and foster carers. The Charter is available on Fosternet and on the Council's website:

<http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/fostering>

16. National Minimum Standards (NMS)

Please note that individual standards may be taken into account and lead to recommendations under any of the judgement areas.

16.1 Outcomes for Children and Young People

- Children know that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account in all aspects of their care, are helped to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases and know how to obtain support and make a complaint **(NMS 1)**.
- Children have a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background **(NMS 2)**.
- Children enjoy sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately **(NMS 3)**.
- Children live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and where they are able to access the services to meet their health needs **(NMS 6)**.
- Children are able to enjoy their interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged to engage in leisure activities **(NMS 7)**.
- Children are able to make a positive contribution to the foster home and their wider community **(NMS 7)**.
- Children and young people achieve their educational potential **(NMS 8)**.
- Children have, where appropriate, constructive contact with their parents, grandparents, siblings, half-siblings, wider family, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives **(NMS 9)**.

- Children are welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued **(NMS 11)**.
- Children feel part of the family and are not treated differently to the foster carer's own children living in the household; the child's needs are met and they benefit from a stable placement **(NMS 11)**.
- Children are prepared for, and supported into, adulthood so that they can reach their potential and achieve economic well-being **(NMS 12)**.

16.2 Quality of Service Provision

- Children enjoy sound relationships with their foster family, interact positively with others and behave appropriately **(NMS 3)**.
- Children live in foster homes which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard; the child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development **(NMS 10)**.
- The fostering service recruits, assesses and supports a range of foster carers to meet the needs of children they provide care for and is proactive in assessing current and future needs of children **(NMS 13)**.
- The fostering panel and decision maker make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations/decisions in line with the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care **(NMS 14)**.
- The responsible authority has information and support from the fostering service, which it needs to facilitate an appropriate match between the carer and child, capable of meeting the child's needs and consistent with the wishes and feelings of the child, so maximising the likelihood of a stable placement **(NMS 15)**.
- Foster carers receive the training and development they need to carry out their role effectively **(NMS 20)**.
- A clear framework of training and development is in place and this is used as the basis for assessing foster carers' performance and identifying their training and development needs **(NMS 20)**.
- Foster carers receive the support and supervision they need in order to care properly for children placed with them **(NMS 21)**.

16.3 Safeguarding Children and Young People

- Children feel safe and are safe; they understand how to protect themselves and are protected from significant harm, including neglect, abuse and accidents **(NMS 4)**.
- Children who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return **(NMS 5)**.

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those who are suitable to work with children and have the appropriate skills, experience and qualifications to deliver an efficient and effective service **(NMS 17)**.
- There is careful selection of staff, fostering households, volunteers and the central list of persons considered suitable to be members of a fostering panel, and there is monitoring of such people to help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm children **(NMS 19)**.
- Allegations and suspicions of harm are handled in a way that provides effective protection and support for children and the person making the allegation, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation **(NMS 22)**.
- Staff and volunteers are supported and guided to fulfil their roles and provide a high quality service to children **(NMS 24)**.

16.4 Leadership and Management

- Children, their parents, foster carers, staff and the responsible authority/placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the fostering service and what services and facilities it provides **(NMS 16)**.
- The fostering service's operation meets the aims and objectives in the statement of purpose **(NMS 16)**.
- The fostering service is financially sound **(NMS 18)**.
- Where a service is to close or substantially change, there is proper planning, to make the transition for children, foster carers and staff as smooth as possible **(NMS 18)**.
- Children and foster carers receive a service from staff, volunteers and panel members, and decision makers who have the competence to meet their needs **(NMS 23)**.
- Staff and volunteers are supported and guided to fulfil their roles and provide a high quality service to children **(NMS 24)**.
- The fostering service is managed ethically, effectively and efficiently, delivering a service which meets the needs of its users **(NMS 25)**.
- Records are clear, up to date, stored securely and contribute to an understanding of the child's life **(NMS 26)**.
- The premises and administrative systems are suitable to enable the service to meet the objectives of its statement of purpose **(NMS 27)**.
- Payments to foster carers are fair and paid in a timely way **(NMS 28)**.
- Foster carers are clear about the fostering service's payment structures and the payments due to them **(NMS 28)**.

- All significant events relating to the health and protection of children fostered by the service are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities **(NMS 29)**.
- Family and friends foster carers receive the support they require to meet the needs of children placed with them **(NMS 30)**.
- Children are cared for in line with their placement plan/short break care plan **(NMS 31)**.
- The fostering service takes action to chase up outstanding reviews or visits from the responsible authority, contributes to those reviews and assists the child to contribute to their reviews **(NMS 31)**.

17. Organisational Structure

17.1 Waltham Forest Council Fostering Service

Waltham Forest Council continues to undergo some restructuring to ensure savings and service improvements. The Families' Directorate was established in August 2012, later becoming the Families and Homes Directorate. It incorporates Education Improvement, Children and Families, Adult Social Care, Stronger Families, Safer Communities, Public Health, Health Integration, Housing and Strategic Commissioning across this range of services.

The Fostering Service is part of Placements Services within the Corporate Parenting Service. Corporate Parenting is part of the wider Children and Families' Service within the Families and Homes Directorate. The Fostering Service was restructured in Autumn 2018 to join the recruitment and support team together. The fostering service is headed by a team manager who reports to Head of Service for Placements Services:

delete this.

17.2 Management of the Service

The Assistant Director (AD) is responsible for both the Fostering and Permanence Services, alongside Children in Care, Care Leavers and the Placement Team.

Sycamore House, Waltham Forest Town Hall Complex,
Forest Road,
Walthamstow
E17 4SU

Tel. 020 8496 3437

The Fostering Team Manager is responsible for one Deputy team manager and two Advanced Practitioners, two Senior Practitioners and 5 Social Workers. The deputy team manager is responsible for the state one worker, recruitment manager and specialist fostering projects Mockingbird and Controlled Migration projects

The Permanence Team Manager is responsible for two Advanced Practitioner and Three Social Workers in relation to Special Guardianship and Special guardianship post order service. This Team Manager will also liaise with the RAA to ensure that smooth transition is achieved for the adoption service joining the RAA..

The Head of Service is responsible for these Team Managers, the RAA and the Agency Adviser.

In addition, there is a dedicated Reviewing Officer for Fostering that is managed within the Quality Assurance Service.

17.3 Staff Details

All staff have enhanced DBS checks which are updated every three years. This includes temporary staff.

All social work staff are registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC).

Each team member is appraised annually as part of the Council's Managing Performance framework, based on an individual work plan and training and development plan.

inin



Fostering Service	
Name	Qualifications
Assistant Director, Corporate Parenting	MA social work BSc Social Work
Head of Service, Corporate Parenting Placement Services	Msc Advanced social work studies Post Graduate certificate in Commissioning and Purchasing of Public care. Certificate Emotional wellbeing of the child. Stage Two Practice Educator (Enabling Others) Diploma in Social Work, Res. Nursing and social work
Carol Spence Household Reviewing Officer	Diploma in Social Work

Fostering Team		
Sophia Brooks Marketing and Recruitment Manager		Chartered Institute of Marketing, Professional Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing and BA Hons degree in Marketing with Business Studies
Cecillia Tan Training Officer		CIPD Level 7 Diploma in HRM MSc. Organisational Psychology
Monique Knight-Andrew Recruitment Officer		Foundation Housing & Urban Regeneration Degree
Charlene Alexander Recruitment Officer		BA Hons degree International Marketing
Xanthe Parker Team Manager		
		Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Systemic Theory Higher Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) Diploma in Counselling
Swapnil Shrivastava Agency Deputy Team Manager		Bachelor in Commerce (B.com) Master's in public administration (1 st year)
Leeford Antwi Advanced Practitioner		BSc Social Work MSc Child Forensic Studies: Psychology & Law
Advanced Practitioner Recruited to		
Laverne Moraise Supervising Social Worker		DIP SW/DIP in Social Science
Cassandra Plummer Supervising Social Worker		Diploma in Social Work
Amy Warren Social Worker		Msc Social work
Althea Shade Agency Social Worker		BA Hons in SW
Carolyn Jones Social Worker		BA (hons) Social work
Ashraf Amir Social worker		MA in Social Work B.Sc (Hons.) in Physics
Carolette Caines Social worker		Bsc Social Science 1991 Dipsw 1993 First year Systemic Therapy 2011
Stage one worker		
Selina Mkandla Social Worker – (0.5) Private Fostering		MA Social Work
David Roth Social worker		MA Eng Lit & Moral Philosophy from Glasgow University 1978 Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) from University of N London 1997 Post Qualifying award(PQ1) from Brunel

	University 2005
Permanence Team	
Sam Quartey	

Team Manager	
Hushnarah Hussain Advanced Practitioner	Practice Educator : South Bank University. Social Work Consolidation , HollowayUniversity.
Gloria Akrobettoe Advanced Practitioner	BA Honours social Science and DipSw
Karen Dwyer	BA(Hons) History/Sociology MA (CQSW) Social Work & Applied Social Studies Advanced Diploma in Psychodynamic Counselling Diploma in Systemic Family Therapy
Lorriane Old	BSW hons (1996-2000) Massey University New Zealand
Pui-Yee Lau Social worker	Master's in social science Diploma in social work
Mae Mcleod Social worker	CQSW - Certificate of Qualification of Social Work – Postgraduate diploma in

18. Complaints

18.1 Making a Formal Complaint

We always try to provide good quality services, but we know that sometimes we get things wrong. Comments and complaints can help us to get things right. We try to resolve differences as soon as they arise between people.

If people are not happy with the service that they or a member of their family are receiving, or if they have applied for a service and been refused, they have the right to complain. They will normally receive our response within 10 days.

The complaints procedure has three stages:

1. At Stage One the staff or agency providing the service will handle the complaint.
2. If you are not satisfied with the reply that you have received at Stage One it can be escalated to Stage Two. A formal investigation by an investigation officer who does not work for the service will commence.
3. If you are still not satisfied with the Stage Two response it can be escalated again to Stage Three. We will refer your complaint and our response to a review panel comprised of two of our officers - not involved in the complaint - and an independent person who will chair the panel.

You can either write directly or we will be happy to send you the complaints form.

All formal complaints should be sent to:

Complaints Manager
Social Care Complaints Team
Residents First
Waltham Forest Town Hall
Forest Road
Walthamstow
London
E17 4JF

Tel: 020 8496 3247

Fax: 020 8496 3659

Web: www.walthamforest.gov.uk

You can discuss your issue or concern with your local Councillor or MP at any time. Details of local Councillors and their surgeries are available on Waltham Forest's website at www.walthamforest.gov.uk

MP's details are available at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/political-structure-mp

You may also contact the Local Government Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the response you have received for your complaint by calling 0845 602 1983 or via their website at www.lgo.org.uk

18.2 Ofsted

Local Authority Social Care services are regularly inspected by Ofsted. If you have a concern or query about Waltham Forest's Fostering Service you can contact Ofsted at:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Textphone/Minicom users: 0161 618 8524

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk