

Camden fostering



Statement of Purpose 2021/2022



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1. Introduction



Under the Fostering Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards, Camden'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.

The statement has been prepared 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

The statement has been endorsed by the Children's Safeguarding and Social Work division (CSSW) senior management group and will be reviewed and updated on at least an annual basis to reflect any developments within the service. The statement has been approved and signed off by Camden's Corporate Parenting Board.

The Fostering Service will ensure that the service is conducted in a manner consistent with this statement at all times 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 Camden's website.

Camden operates using a systemic model of social work practice. This gives social workers increased autonomy, enabling them to be innovative in their decision-making.

In 2017, Ofsted rated Camden's Fostering Service as good and assessed that Camden offered children and young people good quality homes with carers who can meet their needs. Ofsted found:

- Specialist foster carers support children with complex support needs including children at risk of sexual exploitation
- Careful planning to find the right placement means that teenagers with complex needs experience fewer unplanned placement moves
- There is intensive and committed work by staff to find the right homes for children
- Foster carers speak very positively about the service that they receive from a well-managed fostering service
- Foster carers particularly cite the availability and quality of support that they receive from their social workers
- A thorough training offer is available clear delegated authority agreements are in place which enable foster carers to make important routines and day to day decision

2. Roles of the Fostering service



Camden'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 Camden.

Whenever a child is unable to live with their parents, social workers will first seek to place them with Family and Friends foster carers. Where this is not possible, the fostering service will identify a suitable foster placement with a Camden foster carer.

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/young person, 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 and young people.
- The fostering service will seek to identify placements that can accommodate the child/young person's education will be a key consideration whenever choosing placements and every effort will be made to ensure that, wherever possible, the child/young person will remain at their current education provision.
- The fostering service will consider placements for all looked after children and young people giving due regard to their identified needs and their wishes and feelings.
- The fostering service has a commitment to pursue Staying Put for all looked after children placed in foster care after their 18th birthday.

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

Short-term / task centred 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 is 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 responsibility 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 Camden 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.

Camden encourages young people 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 legally looked after and fostering regulations no longer apply. Instead, the placement becomes an 'arrangement' between the foster carer, the young person and Camden Children's Services. All Camden foster carers are encouraged to consider '**Staying Put**' for young people in their care where it is thought to be in the young person's interest.

Family based short breaks offer disabled children the opportunity to have short, planned, regular breaks with a Family Link carer. The service is for children and young people living in Camden who are either on the register of disabled children or meet the registration criteria and have severe and complex needs or life-threatening conditions.

The carers receive specialist training to allow them to meet the child's needs so that they can offer new experiences to disabled children to have fun and enable their

parents to have a period of respite.

Specialist carers foster children and young people presenting very challenging behaviour and emotional needs and who would ordinarily be placed in a residential setting. Many of these young people 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 and young people with experienced foster carers can help set boundaries around their behaviour and in turn help them to overcome their problems.

The Parent and Child Fostering Scheme enables and supports parents to develop their skills in caring for their child as independently as possible using the scheme's structured Parenting Skills.

Development Programme. This involves the parent and their child moving into the foster carer's home for a time limited period of assessment that is used to inform care planning and decisions on care proceedings. These arrangements are offered to young parents who may have been or are a child in need or a looked after child themselves.

Foster to Adopt placements were introduced in July 2013 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.

Camden foster carers can also offer respite service to children in need. The purpose of this service is to provide children the opportunity for fun and positive experiences with approved foster carers as well as to provide a break from caring for the parents. This might include the provision of day, evening, overnight and weekend activities for the child or young person and could take place in a foster carer's home, out in the community or in the family home. This service is offered under S17 of the Children's Act.

At present, Camden has:

- **46** Mainstream fostering households
- **15** Long-term fostering households
- **10** Specialist fostering households
- **2** Family link households
- **14** Family and friends foster carers



3. 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, Camden will look to place them with parents or a Family and Friends foster carer in the first instance, where this is consistent with their welfare. If this is not possible, children will be matched with a Camden 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 in order 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 Camden's services via the Looked After Children's Forum (the Children in Care Council).
- The fostering service recognises the unique role that foster carers play in delivering good outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. 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 and Care Leavers 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 Care Leavers and their carers will be maintained at all times except in order to safeguard children.



4. Key aims of the service



- All looked After Children will have a care plan and placement plan in place that sets out how CSSW 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. Information will be contained in this statement, information leaflets and children's fostering guides and will be widely available in print and on the Camden website.
- The fostering service and foster carers will work jointly with Looked After Children and Care Leavers social workers, the Looked After Children and Care Leavers and Adolescent Mental Health Services (LACCL 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 Camden 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 Care Leavers and foster carers will be made aware of complaints procedures and encouraged to exercise this right. Camden 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 two unannounced visits 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 Camden'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.
- CSSW will provide a strong framework of policy and guidance for Looked After Children and Care Leavers social work teams, the fostering service and foster carers.
- To ensure proper scrutiny of decision-making processes, 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



5. Service Objectives



5.1 Recruitment of Foster Carers:

The fostering service has a recruitment strategy designed to attract prospective carers from within the borough or in neighboring boroughs who are able to meet the identified needs of the children and young people who require placements. This is to ensure that Camden can fully discharge its statutory sufficiency duty.

To ensure a high quality of care in placement, Camden 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 are able to 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 marketing officer and a designated recruitment social worker who coordinate all recruitment campaigns and activities. A fostering website exists as part of the Camden Council website to give potential foster carers information on fostering for Camden Council and allows them to register their interest online. A free phone has been set up for enquiries and open evenings are held monthly, so those interested in fostering have an opportunity to meet members of the fostering team.

Camden is a member borough of the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium. The consortium undertakes joint fostering recruitment activities in the form of advertising, information sessions and a joint website, which helps Camden reach a wider audience of prospective foster carers.

The recruitment strategy aims to target a range of different audience types to match Camden children. Recruitment activities use different methods including online and out of home advertising, events, press coverage and working with the local community groups and professional organisations within Camden.

Camden's fostering service has developed a range of materials to support the recruitment of foster carers, such as fostering recruitment packs, information leaflets, newsletters and a specific website which provides information on fostering and the assessment, support and training processes.

In 2013, Camden Council launched two initiatives to attract local residents to become foster carers and to also retain existing carers:

- The council tax exemption scheme whereby foster carers who are residents in the borough are exempt from paying council tax.
- The Camden fostering and adoption housing initiative whereby 10 large properties (2–4-bedroom houses) per annum within Camden are offered to either new or existing foster carers or adopters where housing is a limiting factor.

Camden involves young people and takes their views into consideration in the recruitment and assessment process for foster carers. This is undertaken in partnership with the CSSW Participation Officer. The fostering service holds an annual fostering awards ceremony to reward the borough's foster carers for long service of five, ten, fifteen and twenty years. The team also produces a newsletter three times a year that goes out to all Camden foster carers and is also used as a recruitment tool at community events.

5.2 Assessment and approval 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 are capable of providing a high level of care to meet the needs of looked after children.

Although the two stages can 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 duty worker around eligibility and motivation to foster.
- Initial home visit: a short assessment where information is obtained about the applicant and their household.

- Preparation group: a three-day preparation and training group which involves looking at the key elements of fostering based on the “skills to foster” format designed by the Fostering Network but developed to meet Camden’s specific needs.
- Assessment: an in-depth assessment report using the CoramBAAF FI form 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 supervising 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 information gathered informs the assessment report provided to the fostering panel when making recommendations on the approval of applicants.



5.3 Fostering Panel

Camden has a joint Fostering, and Permanence Panel, which has been in place since October 2014. It is an independent panel, set up to oversee Camden's fostering service as set out in the Children Act 1989, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

The panel's overall functions and purpose is to:

- To consider and make recommendations about the approval of long-term 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 requested 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.
- 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 Camden'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. Camden's 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 Camden as much as possible. The director for CSSW makes the final decision as Camden's 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.
- All annual reviews for specialist 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 by Head of Service.

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.

5.4 Matching and placement of children

The fostering service duty team is responsible for dealing with requests for foster care placements and finding a suitable Camden foster carer for a child, based on information provided by the child's social worker. The child's social worker will provide as much information about the child as possible to inform this placement search, but it is recognised that in an emergency this information may be limited. For planned placements however, the information provided should include the child and family assessment, care plan and any other information relevant to the placement request record. The fostering duty social worker will consider and assess all of this information and match the child with a Camden carer who can best meet their needs.



The duty social worker will discuss the placement with the carer to ensure that they have all the information about the child to make an informed decision about whether they are able to meet their needs and that the placement is likely to succeed. Where possible, arrangements are made for children to visit placements prior to moving. Once the placement has been deemed suitable a matching document is completed and a placement agreement meeting will be held to formally agree the placement, discuss care of the child and confirm the delegated authority arrangements.

The duty social worker will liaise with the fostering manager if any temporary change is needed to the carer's terms of approval in order to care for the child (known as a variation/exemption). In general, placements are agreed for the duration of the child's stay in care unless the carer is on the emergency placement rota or the child must be moved because of matching considerations. The Family and Friends team can advise on placing children with a member of their family and friends network (a Family and Friends foster carer) under regulation 24 where this is possible. If a suitable placement cannot be found, the resources team will match the child with a suitable foster carer from a private fostering agency.

5.5 Partnership Working

Camden is part of the North London Consortium along with fostering services from Barnet, Hackney, Haringey, Enfield and Islington. The consortium aims to improve services and share resources across north London. Last year this included shared recruitment activities, training and fostering placements.

The fostering service also has a long-standing relationship with CAFC (Camden Association for Foster Care) and works closely with LACCL CAMHS to co-ordinate mental health services for Looked After Children and Care Leavers with mental health needs.

5.6 Training and support for Foster Carers

Training is an integral part of the foster carer's role and begins during the preparation and assessment process. Camden takes the development of foster carers, including Family and Friends foster carer, very seriously and all carers are expected to attend ongoing and core training. Members of the fostering household will also receive relevant training.

All foster carers will have a personal development plan which will record their training history and their current training needs and identify the training they need to develop their skills and knowledge. The personal development plan is reviewed each year as part of the foster carer's annual review.

All foster carers are issued with a Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) pack which they are required to complete within 12 months of approval with the help of their supervising social worker, or 18 months for Family and Friends foster carers. Training and support groups are arranged for foster carers who would like support in relation to completing the CWDC/TSDS. All Camden foster carers have access to a full training programme which includes core training commissioned by the fostering service, online training, consortium training and multi-agency training. Camden is always reviewing its training policy with a view to further enhancing its programme and identifying specialist courses for the future.

Support groups

Camden foster carers are encouraged to attend support groups which will help them develop their skills together and to share experiences. The Camden fostering service runs the following groups:

- 0 – 5 support group

- 5-11 support group
- 11+ support group
- Family Link support group

Foster carers also have their own group, the Camden Association for Foster Care (CAFC) that meets regularly and liaises with social work managers. The group also meets with the service manager for Resources and the fostering team manager on a regular basis.

Under Camden's buddying system, newly approved foster carers get extra support from an established foster carer who can provide them with practical help and advice.

Supervision

Supervising social workers are allocated to foster carers once they have been approved by the fostering panel. Foster carers are managed and supported by supervising social workers from the fostering service and receive supervisory visits at least once a month and more often when a child is first placed. Supervising social workers will also visit when needed or as requested by the foster carer. At least two visits annually will be unannounced.

The purpose of the visits is to support the foster carer in their role and help them to meet the children's needs in placement. Supervising social workers offer practical, emotional and financial support to foster carers, providing them with information and helping them to deal with the stresses of caring for Looked After Children.

Financial support

Camden foster carers receive generous weekly allowances to help with the costs of caring for children in the placement as well as a weekly fee for caring for the child. Specialist foster carers receive an enhanced financial package to reflect their level of skills. All carers are paid three weeks holiday allowance and all children in foster placements receive a holiday allowance.

A new financial policy has been circulated this year to all approved foster carers. This policy is reviewed annually.

Other support services

Foster carers can also call on support from other Children, Schools and Families services such as:

- Camden's virtual school that supports the education of looked after children
- LACCL CAMHS, who can help co-ordinate child and adolescent mental health services for children with mental health needs

- The Camden health team for children's general health needs
- The emergency duty team for support and assistance outside office hours
- The CSSW participation officer, who can ensure that children and young people are involved in decisions about their future.

The fostering service will continue to meet the annual cost of subscribing to the carers organisation the Fostering Network, for all Camden approved foster carers. This enables carers to use all the advice and support services provided by the Network.

Communication and consultation

All Camden foster carers have access to the Camden Association for Foster Care (CAFC)

interactive website which has been developed to help CAFC be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all foster carers in Camden. As well as improving communication between carers and the fostering service, it also offers foster carers a platform to raise concerns and to seek support.



All relevant Camden policies and procedures, including the foster carers' handbook are available on the website and all foster carers have been advised by CAFC on how to access these policies.

The fostering service also produces a newsletter that goes out to all Camden foster carers three times a year. It contains information about upcoming training, the CAFC, relevant legislation, case studies, events etc. It is also available on the CAFC website and the council website, where it is used as a recruitment tool.

Camden holds consultation days for all our foster carers twice a year to share ideas and knowledge and to hear directly from our carers. We are using these consultation days as a platform to gain a greater sense of our carers' views and needs.

Camden also has a text message alert system to remind carers about upcoming training, special events or other matters. This builds on the use of telephone calls, emails and direct visits as a way of keeping our foster carers informed and supported around relevant matters and issues.

5.7 Protecting Children, supporting services

Camden fostering service has a duty to ensure that any concerns about the safety or welfare of a child in placement is investigated and will work within the London child protection procedures. Allegations will be investigated in a timely and transparent manner, and the fostering service will treat foster carers fairly, informing

them in writing as soon as possible about how allegations will be investigated.

Camden foster carers are offered independent social work support from within the North London Consortium as well as support from CAFC. Foster carers can also contact Fosterline for support. The fostering service will continue to pay the carer their weekly fee if they have a vacancy during the period of the investigation.

The fostering service has a comprehensive policy and procedure on investigation of child protection and care standards allegations which is distributed to all foster carers and made available on the CAFC website. The information is also available in the fostering handbook.

6. The Fostering service



The fostering service is located within the Children’s Safeguarding and Social Work division which is part of Camden Council’s Supporting People directorate. The team works closely with the Resources team, who commission the provision of placements and family services.

The fostering team consists of a team manager, three senior practitioners and ten social workers. In addition, we have a service manager who also acts as the Panel Advisor, and an Independent Reviewing Officer. The recruitment of prospective foster carers is managed by a dedicated recruitment social worker and two marketing officers.

All social workers in the Fostering team hold a qualification in social work (CQSW/ Dip SW) and have at least two years’ post qualifying experience. All staff recruited to the service have undergone robust employment checks by Camden’s 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 development social workers, who are responsible for the recruitment, assessment and training of all foster carers, and supervising social workers, who are responsible for monitoring and supporting foster carers once they have been approved.

All social worker 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.

7. Coronavirus



On 23rd March 2020, the UK went into lockdown in a bid to address the growing Coronavirus pandemic. The “Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020” were introduced on 24th April 2020. The majority of the amendments are designed to relax strict timescales and replace them, where appropriate, by a requirement that if the timescales cannot be met, they should be met as soon as “reasonably practicable.”

On 8 March 2021, the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 were made and came into force on 30 March 2021.

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the expiry date for the easing of regulatory requirements has been extended to 30 September 2021, in relation to social work visits, adoption assessments, the frequency of Ofsted inspections and registered person visits to residential family centres.

Webinar’s and online training courses were sourced and replaced the regular face to face foster carer training. Foster carers attend panel online via MS Teams and foster carer support groups are also being facilitated online.

Foster carers have been provided with additional financial support during the lockdown periods. This is to support with increased costs associated with lockdown e.g. extra food costs, increased household bills and additional school uniforms. The service has ensured that all looked after children have access to laptops for home schooling.

Understandably, the pandemic has caused a significant amount of anxiety for foster carers with some having to shield. The fostering team have completed risk assessments for all foster carers to ensure that their individual circumstances have been factored into all plans.

Risk assessments are reviewed and updated every 6 months. The task of assessing prospective carers has also been adapted in light of the pandemic. Fostering assessments have been completed online along with open evenings and the pre-approval “Skills to foster” training course.

The fostering team manager regularly communicates with all the foster carers and provides them with resources around the pandemic and how to take care of themselves and the children and young people. Information from CAMHS and the virtual school is also shared with the foster carers.

The fostering team manager together with the workers from the Virtual School held virtual coffee sessions to discuss their concerns about school and learning.

The fostering service has also been working to review foster carers risk assessments and move towards face-to-face visits as the situation with pandemic has changed. This will be reviewed again on the 21st of June 2021. The fostering service together with public health Camden has offered priority vaccinations for the foster carers.

8. Black Lives Matter



2020 will go down in the history books for a number of reasons. The global coronavirus pandemic has been devastating and humbling. However, the issue of racism took centre stage once more. In fact, the tragic death of George Floyd shone a light on a pandemic that has existed in our society far longer than Coronavirus.

Camden's fostering team is working hard to ensure that the support we offer young people and foster carers is adequate and suitable to tackle racism and other forms of discrimination. In order to respond in the most meaningful way, there is a need for all of us (Professionals and Carers) to reflect, educate ourselves and better understand the impact of racism, unconscious bias and discrimination in society. We truly believe that by having these conversations with young people we can be hopeful that future generations can strive towards a more equal society. As such, fostering presents a unique opportunity.

On 26th November 2020, we held a session with Camden foster carers and Martin Pratt (Executive Director – Supporting People) to discuss “being a better corporate parent to our black, Asian and other minority ethnic looked after children and care leavers.” The discussions were insightful, open and honest.

We are reviewing our foster carer training offer to ensure that our training around diversity, equality and inclusion is current and thought-provoking. Our vision is for Camden staff, foster carers and young people to feel comfortable calling out racism and discussing matter pertaining to race and discrimination. We will be working closely with CAFC to ensure that we keep the views of foster carers at the forefront of our thinking.

9. Complaints



Camden's Supporting People Directorate operates a children's complaints system that is compliant with the requirements of the Children Act 1989. If a looked after child is not happy with the service they have received, they should speak to their foster carer or social worker about making a complaint. They will be entitled to an advocate to support and represent them in the process. It is an expectation that children using the complaints system are supported by their foster carers.

Advice on making a complaint can be sought from the complaints and representations team in the Children, Schools and Families Directorate. This team can be contacted in the following ways:

Freephone: 0800 393 561
Telephone: 020 7974 6673
Fax: 020 7974 1439
Email: children.complaints@camden.gov.uk

Address:
Information and records management team FREEPOST RSLT-RJBR-TXAA
London Borough of Camden Town Hall
London WC1H 9JE

Camden also has a separate foster carer's complaints procedure to manage those occasions when a foster carer is dissatisfied with the service provided to them by the fostering service.

10. Fostering Management Structure



Name	Designation
Martin Pratt	Executive Director, Supporting People
Rashida Baig	Director, Children's Safeguarding and Social Work
Sally Joseph	Head of Children's Care Provision
Pal Jandu	Service Manager and Panel Advisor
James Kargbo	Team Manager
Zinah Parekh	Senior practitioner, Private Fostering
Samantha Grenardo	Senior Practitioner, Training and Development
Yasmin Iyyaz	Senior Practitioner, Assessments
Melissa Gunduz Monique Fernandez Ewa Remon Eleni Christodoulou Blair Mortimer Jason O'Brien Amy O' Sullivan	Supervising Social Workers
Amy Sneddon Jonny Persoff Jennifer Duran	Assessment Social Workers
Lauren Crawley	Recruitment Social Worker
Rodney Ayer Marco Reis	Marketing and Recruitment Officers





If any stakeholders have any feedback or comments about this document or the role of Camden's Fostering Service, please contact:

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