



Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

Family, Friends and Fostering Service

Matching and placements

Camden's Children and Learning Directorate uses relational practice as the foundation for all our work. Our integrative relational practice framework is based on our values, and is designed to help achieve the Directorate's purpose: to work with children, families and communities to make a positive, lasting difference to their futures, so they have the best start in life.

We recognise the impact of structural inequalities on the lives of the children and families we work with and as a service we will embrace inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice based on our values and our mission to champion social justice.

Our practice framework centres on honest and compassionate relationships with those we serve and with each other. It is an expectation that all Directorate policies and procedures are implemented in line with our practice framework, and that any actions within policies and procedures reflect its ethics, values and practice expectations.

1 Introduction

- The Family, Friends and Fostering Service and the Resources services are responsible for supporting children's placements by carefully matching children with foster carers who can:
 - meet their needs
 - provide them with a stable home environment.
 - support them to achieve good outcomes
 - help them to maintain links with their family and community
 - help them develop positive relationships, self-image and identity.
- The policy outlines all the processes that need to be undertaken when placing a child with a foster carer and sets out the role and responsibilities of all workers involved, including the supervising social worker.

2 Principles of matching

- The Family, Friends and Fostering Service recognises the need to find suitable placements for Looked After Children that can meet their identified needs and match their cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. However, it is also recognised that it may not always be possible to meet all these criteria.
- The service will therefore ensure that all fostering placements are able to fulfil essential requirements in terms of meeting the child's identified developmental needs, in particular their physical and emotional health, educational and social needs.
- It is the service's policy to match children according to the skills and experience of the foster carer to ensure that their essential developmental needs are met and that they are able to achieve good outcomes.
- When considering potential foster placements, the service will take into account the impact the placement may have on the fostering household, including other foster children.
- When considering requests for placements, the service will use all available information on the child's needs provided by the child's social worker and information about possible foster carers available in their Form F assessment and from discussion with their supervising social worker.

- Looked After Children with specialist needs as identified in their assessment will be placed with a suitable specialist foster carer.
- Children who are placed by the Emergency Duty team out of hours will be initially placed with a carer who is on the rota to take emergency placements. The rota will include a range of carers who are able to take a wide variety of age groups.
- Once placed, the service will endeavour to support that placement and avoid placement moves as long as the carer is willing to continue to care for the child and remaining at the placement is in the child's best interests.

3 Trans-racial and trans-community placements

- The service will strive to find culturally appropriate placements for Looked After Children, but where this is not possible, the service will work with the child's allocated social worker and the foster carer to ensure that resources are in place to help the foster carer to meet these needs and enable the child to maintain their cultural identity.
- Where a looked after child is placed in a trans-racial or trans-community placement on first being accommodated, and it is clear that the placement is able to meet their developmental needs, the Family, Friends and Fostering Service will allow the child to remain in the placement in order to avoid an unnecessary placement move or possible placement breakdown.

4 Location

- The Family, Friends and Fostering Service will initially seek to place children with a Camden foster carer so that they are able to remain as close to their community as possible, and continue to attend their own school, especially for those children who are in year 11. Only if it is not possible to find a suitable match with a Camden foster carer will the service consider using a private and voluntary placement.
- Where possible, the service will choose placements that enable the child to attend their current school. For younger children, placements will be chosen on the basis of the foster carer being able to bring the child to school, or for older children, that they are able to travel to school alone safely.

- The location of the placement will also be taken into account when considering the need to facilitate contact with parents, siblings and family members.
- Where children are placed with private and voluntary foster carers outside Camden, the service will continue to search for a suitable Camden foster carer if this is in the child's best interests.

5 Consultation

- The service will consult with the child's social worker and the CLA manager regarding the choice of placement and any potential matches, and where possible will take their wishes, and those of the child and their parents, into account.
- However, when considering matches, the overriding principle is that the welfare and safety of the child is paramount, and this should be a deciding factor where there is possible conflict regarding the choice of placement.
- Possible placements will be discussed with foster carers as soon as possible in the matching process in order to provide them with as much information about the child so that they are able to make an informed decision on whether to go ahead with the placement.

6 Siblings

- The Fostering Service will always strive to keep siblings together unless there are clear reasons evidenced in the assessment for placing them separately. If it is not possible to accommodate siblings together initially, the Fostering Service will continue to search for a suitable placement so that they can be placed together.
- Where siblings are placed separately, the foster carer and their supervising social worker will work with the children's allocated social worker to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to facilitate contact.

7 Requests for placements

Role of the CSFH social worker

- Social workers in the CSFH team are responsible for carrying out a child and family assessment which must be agreed by their manager. However an emergency placement can be provided prior to the child and family assessment being completed where this is necessary as long as sufficient information about the child's needs is made available in the *Request for placement and matching* record.
- A *Request for placement and matching* record must be completed for both emergency and planned placements, and all ICS records relating to Looked After Children must be completed by the CSFH social worker within 10 days of the child being accommodated.
- A full placement plan record should be completed for planned placements, but in the case of emergency placements, there should be some indication as to what the likely overall placement plan will be for the child and how long they are likely to remain accommodated.
- CSFH managers are responsible for requesting placements from the Resource team via the request on MOSAIC. CSFH social workers are responsible for completing the *Request for placement and matching* record and providing all available information about the child and what work has been carried out with the family to date.

Role of the Resources team

- The team is responsible for enabling access to resources for Looked After Children and managing the use of residential and private and voluntary care.
- In order to ensure Camden complies with care planning regulations, the team will check that:
 - all work to support the family and enable the child to remain at home has been carried out
 - there is a legal basis for providing accommodation to the child and that relevant thresholds for accommodation provision have been met
 - possible family and friends care arrangements have been explored and ruled out

- foster care is the most suitable alternative care arrangement for the child.
- The Resources service manager is responsible for deciding on the best provision for the child based on the information contained in the referral form.
- If the service manager agrees that a fostering placement is in the child's best interests, the Family, Friends and Fostering Service will be informed by the Resources service and requested to find a suitable foster placement.

8 Matching processes

Dealing with referrals

- The Family, Friends and Fostering Service duty worker is responsible for dealing with requests for foster care placements and finding a suitable Camden foster carer for the child based on information provided by the child's social worker and what placements are available at the time.
- For emergency placements, the Resources service social worker is likely to contact the fostering duty worker to discuss a case and see if there are any Camden foster carers available before a formal request for placement has been made by the child's social worker.
- At this point, only basic information about the child such as age and gender may be available, but the fostering duty worker should be able to give an indication of availability from the list of foster carers who have a space and can begin looking at possible matches at that point.
- When the child's social worker has submitted the completed *Request for placement and matching* record, and the service manager has agreed to provide a foster placement, the referral form will be passed to the duty worker to begin looking for a suitable placement for the child.
- The child's social worker should also provide as much information about the child as possible. For planned placements, this should include the child and family assessment, completed placement plan and as much information on the *Request for placement and matching* record as possible.

- For emergency placements, the social worker should provide the child and family assessment giving reasons why a placement is needed and an outline placement plan. They must also complete the *Request for placement and matching* record as far as information is available. All documents should be available on the child's MOSAIC record.

Selecting and arranging placements

- The Fostering duty worker should read through the information and make further enquiries of the child's professional network where possible in order to obtain enough information about the child to enable a suitable match to be made.
- The Fostering duty worker should contact potential Camden foster carers to discuss the placement and find out if they are prepared to accept the placement based on the information available. The foster carer's supervising social worker should also be involved in these discussions.
- An assessment of the overall potential impact of the placement on the fostering household should be carried out by the fostering duty worker. The worker should also liaise with allocated social workers for other children placed with the potential foster carer to obtain their views on the proposed placement and how it may affect both children.
- The fostering duty worker should regularly feedback to the Resources service social worker to inform them of progress regarding finding a placement and giving them details of any available matches.
- The Resources service social worker will then liaise with the child's social worker to discuss the available placements and enable them to make a decision. At this point, the child's social worker may need to approach the Resources team to request that a further search is done to find a more suitable carer.
- When a suitable Camden foster carer has been found, the fostering duty worker should inform the Resources service social worker who will contact the child's social worker to make final arrangements for the placement to go ahead.

- Once the fostering duty worker has confirmation from the child's social worker that the child has been placed with the foster carer, they should record the placement in the Children's Provision and DCT Finance services step on MOSAIC. This will then generate payment to the foster carer.

9 Dealing with difficulties in finding a match

Exemptions

- If it is not possible to find a suitable Camden foster placement for the child, the Fostering social worker should discuss the issue with the manager and look at obtaining an exemption for a foster carer so that they are able to take the child even if this is not consistent with their terms of approval.
- Full details of the procedures regarding obtaining exemptions can be found in the *Exemptions and extensions* policy. [Exemptions and Extensions/Variations to Foster Carer...](#)

Private and voluntary carers

- If it is not possible to obtain an exemption in order to place the child with a suitable Camden foster carer, and all efforts to find a suitable Camden foster carer have been exhausted, this should be reported to the Resources service social worker. The Fostering social worker should provide details of carers who were approached and the reason they were not able to take the child.
- The Resources service social worker will then look for a suitable private and voluntary foster carer and pass any available information on potential carers to the fostering duty worker to carry out the matching process.
- Information that should be made available for matching should include the carer's Form F assessment, their most recent annual review record and details of any checks taken out on them. The fostering duty worker should decide the foster carer's suitability against the private and voluntary checklist.