

Lewisham Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose 2014 - 2015



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Policy Context.

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 requires all fostering services to provide a written Statement of Purpose setting out the aims and objectives of the service and the facilities and services provided. This document is made available to foster carers, Fostering Panel members, staff, prospective foster carers, any child placed by the service and the parent of any child placed.

The Fostering Service ensures that Equal Opportunities are integrated into all aspects of service delivery and that all foster carers are effectively assessed and supported, taking into account the needs of the individual child/young person.

Statement of Purpose.

The Statement of Purpose relates to the Fostering Service provided by the London Borough of Lewisham, under the requirements of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. This Statement of Purpose will be subject to a review on at least an annual basis.

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed and approved by the Mayor of Lewisham Council on an annual basis.

A copy of this Statement of Purpose will be provided to OFSTED and will be available to:

- All staff working for the Fostering Service
- All staff involved with the welfare of children Looked After within the auspices of the Fostering Service
- Any child and young person living with foster carers
- Any parent or significant other of a child or young person placed with foster carers
- Members of the public

The Fostering Services Provider responsible for the recruitment of foster carers will ensure that the service is at all times conducted in a manner that is consistent with this statement.

The overall aims and objectives of the Fostering Service

To provide a safe and secure family environment for children and young people Looked After by Lewisham Council.

All Foster placements must meet the identified emotional and physical needs of the individual child and young person. These developmental needs will include their racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, dietary and any specific needs.

When appropriate, the Fostering Service will seek to identify placements that will enable siblings to be placed together.

Wherever practicable, the Fostering Service will seek to avoid multiple placement moves for children and young people.

We will always seek to identify placements that can accommodate contact (where appropriate) with relatives and significant others in the child's and young person's network.

Consideration will be given to the child's and young person's educational needs when deciding upon a placement and every effort will be made to ensure that wherever possible the child or young person can remain in their current educational establishment.

The Fostering Service will, actively work in partnership with children, young people, their family and other relevant professionals/agencies involved in promoting positive outcomes for

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Looked After Children by the London Borough of Lewisham. The primary aim of the partnership work will be to meet the need of the individual children and young people, and wherever possible support family reunification.

Management.

Claire Moatti is the Interim Service Manager for Fostering. Claire started in Lewisham in April 2014, she has B.A Sociology from Essex University, a Master of Applied Social Studies from Oxford University, a CQSW and Diploma in Social Work from Southampton University. She is a qualified Play Therapist and has a Diploma in Management. She has 30 years Social work and management experience within London boroughs.

Olaitan Aregbesola (Ola) Fostering (Support and Development) Team Manager, has a Bachelor of Arts (Hons); Degree in Health and Social Care Practice and a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work. Ola has had experience of working in Independent and Private Fostering Agencies. Ola joined Lewisham in April 2010 as a Supervising Social Worker before her recent promotion to Fostering Team Manager and is currently undergoing her management training. Ola manages one of the two teams of Social Workers who supervise and support Lewisham Foster Carers.

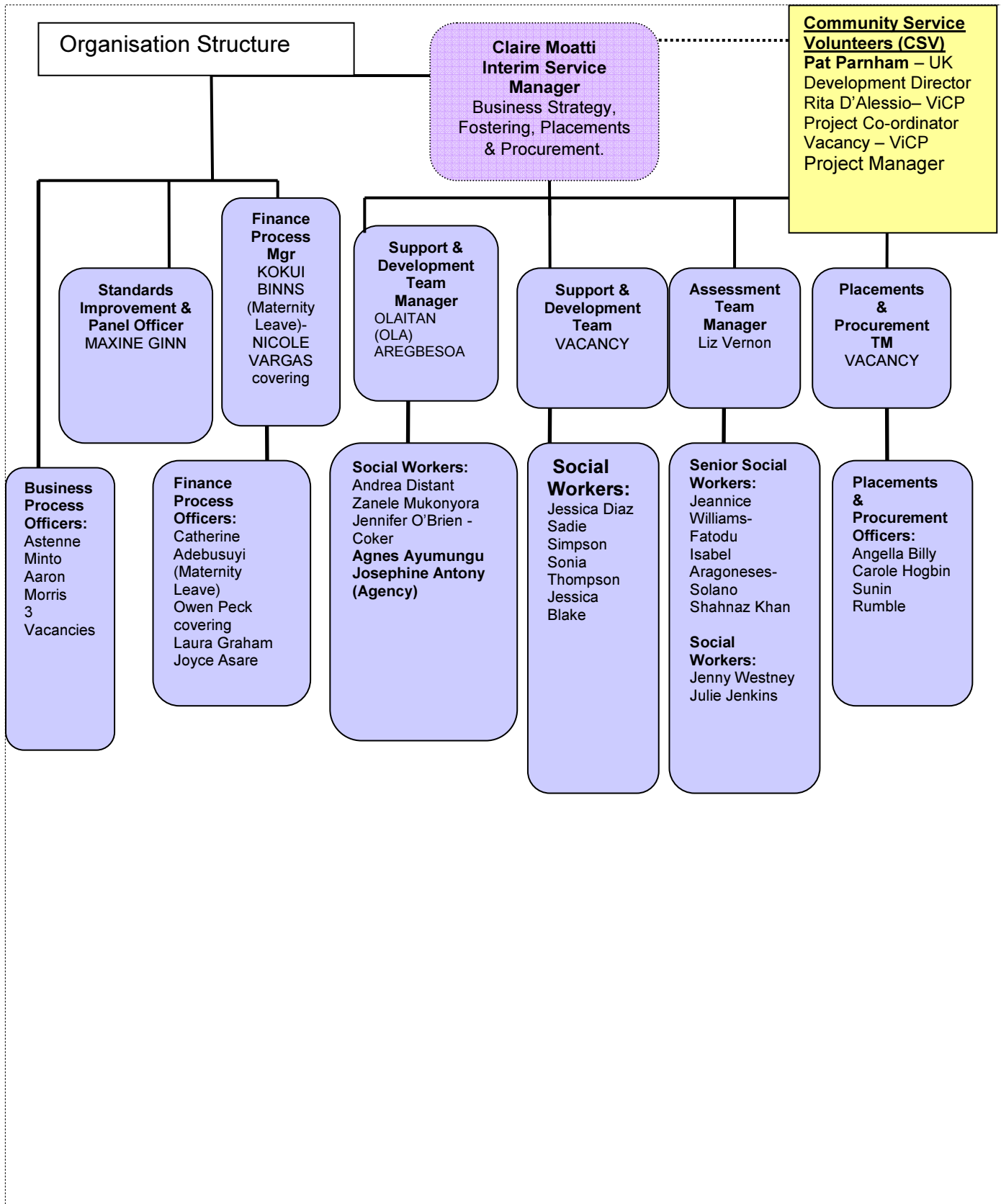
Elizabeth Vernon (Liz), Fostering Assessment and Kinship Team Manager has a masters in Social Work and a Graduate Diploma in Work with Children and Families (with Specialist Award in Social Work). Liz was an experienced Senior Social Worker in Lewisham's Family Social Work Service prior to her joining the Fostering Service's management team in July 2013. Liz

currently manages the Assessment and Kinship Team who undertake family, friends and connected persons assessments.

All social work managers, senior practitioners and social workers hold a social work qualification and have relevant child care experience. Managers and all qualified social workers are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

The teams are culturally and racially diverse, consisting both of workers with extensive experience in fostering and workers who have joined fostering more recently but bring with them vast experience from other areas of children's social work.

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Services Provided

Mainstream Foster Carers – Foster carers provide placements for children and young people aged 0-18, whose care plan is either to return to their birth family or move to a permanent placement. Placements with mainstream carers can vary between one day to several years in the placement.

Permanence or Long-Term Foster Carers

- make a commitment to care for a child or young person, until they reach independence.

Short Break Carers (Family Based Respite Care) - where carers are 'linked' to families with children with a disability to enable them to have regular, planned breaks during the year.

Family and Friends Foster Carers (Kinship) - are approved to look after a specific child or children. These are family members or friends who already know the child or children before they moved to live with them.

Emergency Placements - There are 9 Lewisham approved Foster Carers who offer emergency care and accept unplanned placements and provide 24 hour, 7 days a week crisis care for children who require an immediate placement outside of normal office working hours. This Foster Care Scheme has been running for 6 months and is already making a real difference as children no longer have to hang around police stations for several hours waiting for a foster carer to be identified. The Emergency Duty Team is made up of Social Workers who work between 5 pm and 9 am during the normal working week, and over weekends and Bank Holidays throughout the year. This team responds to children in need of

safeguarding and as necessary places them with approved and experienced foster carers as Emergency Placements.

Parent and Child arrangements with Foster Carers

As required under the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, a written policy was produced which is intended to safeguard children placed with foster carers from abuse or neglect. This policy includes a statement of measures to be taken to safeguard children placed with foster carers including if a parent is also placed in a foster home with a child.

Foster carers who may wish to offer such placements should ordinarily have discussed the matter with their Supervising Social Worker and this should be considered as part of the Foster Carer's Annual Review. The Foster Care Agreement entered into by the foster carer with the Fostering Service should show that the foster carer is approved for this type of arrangement.

Matters considered when making a proposed parent and child arrangement include:

- Is the parent an adult or below the age of 18 years.
- If below 18 years of age, is the parent looked after themselves?
- Is the child to be considered a Looked After Child?
- Purpose of the parent and child placement.
- Likely duration of the placement.
- Does the parent have a criminal history?
- Risk assessment of the parent.

Staying Put

Lewisham has a Staying Put Policy which sets out the arrangements whereby the authority will promote the extension of foster care placements beyond a young person's eighteenth birthday. The intention being to ensure young people can remain with their former foster carers until they

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are prepared for adulthood, and experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and are better placed to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown.

This procedure sets out the conditions required to extend a former fostering arrangement beyond a young person's eighteenth birthday, the associated financial implications, the social care requirements associated with extending former fostering arrangements and the consequential Income Tax, National Insurance and Welfare Benefit issues.

Young people are legally no longer in care from the age of eighteen and therefore, fostering arrangements no longer apply. The legal basis on which they occupy the former foster care home changes and they become an 'excluded licensee' who is effectively lodging in the Staying Put carer/s home. However, this should not mean that the young person is treated differently than as if they were a fostered child. The placement should be carefully planned to ensure that the young person and the carer/s understand the nature of the arrangement and the positive aspects of being in foster care are not diminished.

Staying Put Procedure is applicable to all young people looked after by Lewisham who are living with foster carers on their eighteenth birthday, whether they are with Lewisham carers or with Independent Fostering Agency carers (IFA).

The policy also applies to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who reach the age of 18. However, in circumstances where the young person is awaiting a 'Removal Notice' continued financial support must be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Young people in kinship care who are eligible children and looked after up to the age of 18 may continue to remain where they are under a Staying Put arrangement.

Young people who are in residential placements are not covered by the Staying Put Procedure, but early transition planning will be essential for these young people to help them achieve good outcomes in the future.

Principles

Each child is unique and their welfare paramount.

The child's family is the preferred place for children to live wherever possible.

Where a child needs to be looked after outside their family there is no compromise to the provision of high quality individualised care.

Children have a right to feel safe, be protected, be treated with respect and dignity. They should be encouraged, nurtured, supported, helped, looked after and their heritage valued. We will consult with them in order to develop a personal sense of worth, well-being and independence.

The parents, carers and relatives of looked after children have a right to be kept informed, involved and consulted as appropriate. They have the right to be treated as individuals with respect and without being judged.

Individual planning is imperative from the outset of each placement followed by regular reviews to ensure all the needs of the child are met.

Children are entitled to receive education which will promote their general culture and enable them to develop their abilities, individual judgement, and a sense of moral and social

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responsibility to become useful members of society.

The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for their education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with the parents and/or with the Local Authority as Corporate Parents.

Each Looked After Child is an active, informed participant in the process of their own health care, incorporating confidentiality and choice appropriate to her or his age and understanding. A full health assessment is carried out for each Looked After Child over the age of 5 years once a year and twice a year for those under the age of 5. A health plan is drawn up in consultation with health professionals and this is kept under review in light of the regular health assessment. The Lewisham Children and Young People's plan incorporates strategies to reduce health inequalities and improve the health of Looked After Children.

Children have the right to expect the very best professional care from foster carers. Therefore, Lewisham is committed to the provision of quality support, supervision, advice, consultation and training to enable foster carers to meet the child's needs. In addition there is 24-hour telephone support available to foster carers provided by the Service Manager and Team Managers and the Emergency Duty Team where social work input is required outside of normal office hours.

Staff make a major contribution to the service and receive an excellent standard of structured supervision, support and training in order to facilitate best practice in all of their activities.

Lewisham Fostering Service is committed to working in partnership with everyone involved in children's lives.

Lewisham Fostering Service promotes the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and the service is anti-discriminatory in practice. The Fostering Service ensures that celebrating diversity is integral in all aspects of service delivery. All foster carers are effectively assessed and supported, taking into account the needs of the individual child/young person, including specifically their culture, ethnicity, race, religion, class, sexual orientation and disability.

Lewisham Fostering Service actively self-regulates its performance and maintains openness to ongoing critical evaluation. The Fostering Service welcomes comments and ideas for improvement from the children, young people, parents, carers, staff, independent workers, Fostering Panel members and any who have a contribution to make.

Lewisham Fostering Service has a commitment to keeping abreast of developments in Fostering and is committed to change and delivers continuous improvement in service provision.

Foster Carers and Approvals

All foster carers are approved for a specific number of children or sibling groups, or a particular child, or the approval is specific to the age and/or gender of the Looked After Child, or a parent and child arrangement.

As at April 2014, the total number of individual foster carers is 239 in 162 fostering households.

De-Registrations & Resignations

During 2013-2014 1 foster carers (1 household) were de-registered and 4 foster carers (4 fostering households) resigned.

Number of children in placement

As at 31st March 2014, there were approximately 200 Looked After Children placed with Lewisham foster carers or family and friends foster carers.

Complaints and Outcomes

A booklet titled Allegations, Complaints, Serious Cause for Concern - A Guide for Lewisham Foster Carers is available and was specifically produced and designed to guide carers through the process of the investigation of an allegation, complaint or serious cause for concern.

This booklet ensures compliance with: London Child Protection Procedures, Fostering Services Regulations and the National Minimum Standards 2011. Lewisham Council complaints procedure sets out the processes in relation to Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Three complaints.

Allegations, Complaints & Serious Cause for Concern

Lewisham Council provides a range of support to foster carers in particular at times when they have had an allegation, complaint or serious cause for concern made against them. The main support is from the Supervising Social Worker, the Fostering Team Manager and the Service Manager. The Lewisham Foster Care Association in particular the Chair and members of the committee are also available to foster carers who find themselves in this situation. Lewisham Council pays for Fostering Network membership for the Fostering Service. This means that every foster carer is entitled to advice and support from Fostering Network including unlimited Fosterline telephone support. How allegations, complaints and serious cause for concern are dealt with is outlined in the

Fostering Service policy and procedure booklet called Allegations, Complaints and Serious Cause for Concern which is made available to each foster carer at the time of approval.

In 2013-2014 there were 14 allegations made against Lewisham Foster Carers, 1 complaint and 6 serious cause for concern. These were all satisfactorily resolved and quickly. Furthermore, considering that we have over 200 individual foster carers these numbers are very low especially compared to what was the case historically and also compared to other fostering providers – Local Authority and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).

Procedures & Processes for Foster Carer Recruitment & Approval

The recruitment and assessment of applicants to become foster carers was outsourced externally in 2009 and continues to be innovative hence the significant increase in foster carers.

The recruitment and assessment process is led by the Lewisham Service Manager whilst Team Managers quality assure the assessments of the foster carers. Applicants are invited to attend the “Skills to Foster” training as part of their assessment and introduction to fostering.

If applicants are successful in completing the “Skills to Foster” training, a qualified Social Worker will complete a full assessment based upon the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form F. This will involve a series of home visits to collect information regarding household members and their experience and skills relating to looked after children.

Statutory checks and required references are undertaken.

On completion of the assessment, the assessing social worker will prepare a report detailing the

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applicant's suitability, including the Form F and present this to the Lewisham's Fostering Panel.

The content of the Form F report (excluding references) are shared with the applicant, who signs the report to acknowledge that they have read the report. Applicants must attend the Fostering Panel.

Following the Fostering Panel recommendations, a decision is taken by the Director of Children's Social Care as Agency Decision-Maker. Decisions are formally communicated to the applicant verbally by telephone and in writing.

Within 1 month of approval as a Lewisham foster carer, individuals are required to attend an Induction Programme which is delivered by the Service Manager. This informs the newly approved foster carers about the world of Lewisham Fostering Service, Children's Social Care and Lewisham Council. The Induction also explains the fostering task, their role and they meet their mentors and Supervising Social Workers.

Foster Carer Training & Development

A comprehensive training programme is in place and distributed to all foster carers. The programme covers a wide variety of subjects from basic to advanced level, including the opportunity to study for NVQ Level 3 Caring for Children & Young People, and meets the requirements of the Training Support Development Standards (TSDS). Training is an effective opportunity to meet other foster carers, social workers, and to develop skills and learning at the same time.

We encourage foster carers to participate in training courses alongside social workers and Fostering Panel members. The Service

Manager Fostering runs regular development events specifically for foster carers.

Since April 2008, all new foster carers are required to achieve the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for Foster Care within 12 months of their approval. Every foster carer has a Personal Development Plan and is expected to keep a portfolio where they record evidence of their learning against the TSDS. Since the beginning of 2010, the Service Manager personally delivers the TSD Standards working directly with the foster carers. There is an ongoing programme of workshops for the completion of TSDS for new foster carers and attendance is compulsory. Following approval all new foster carers are expected to start work on the TSDS within 1 month of a Looked After Child being placed with them. Once a foster carer has successfully achieved the TSDS they are required to continue their development and to keep the skills they have up to date through the Lewisham Foster Carers rolling programme of training and development.

All new foster carers are required to complete the Foster Carer Core Training Programme, which aims to provide the basic skills and information that new foster carers need to perform their fostering tasks. Basic training is a requirement under the National Minimum Standards and the TSDS Framework. Foster Carers should complete the core training within 12 months of approval.

Lewisham involves foster carers in co-facilitating training events, and to enable them to do this we also offer a Training the Trainers Qualification. This is an important way of learning from each other, promoting partnership working between foster carers and social workers.

The KEEP Programme is a new and exciting project jointly sponsored by the Department of Education (DfE) that focuses on "What Works in

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Foster Care”. This is an evidence based 20 session training programme that empowers foster carers to meet the needs of the children in their care. The Programme focuses on providing parenting tools for foster carers caring for children 12 to 18 years old. The KEEP training programme aims to increase placement stability.

In addition, specialist training is also provided, for example Fire Safety; Managing Childhood Illnesses; First Aid; Positive Discipline & De-Escalation Techniques; Digital Life Story Work etc.

Supporting and Reviewing Foster Carers.

Foster Carers are provided with a range of support to promote placement stability and improve the outcomes of Looked After Children, for example:

- An allocated Supervising Social Worker.
- Regular home visits, minimum 1 per month.
- 24-hour telephone support (out-of-hours) support and advice from Service.
- Manager and Team Managers and social work input available from Emergency Duty Team.
- Access to Therapeutic Support via Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Reflective practice sessions for foster carers run by CAMHS Therapists.
- Application of the Secure Base Support Model for foster carers provided in partnership with the LAC Service.
- Themed Support Groups: Mainstream, Male Foster Carers Group and New Foster Carers Group.

- Lewisham Mentoring Scheme: support and advice from an experienced carer.
- Lewisham Carers Supporting Carers Scheme (LCSC): practical support e.g. looking after Looked After Children whilst carer attends training.
- Rolling programme of training.
- Financial Support.
- Membership of the Fostering Network.
- Mentoring Scheme – all newly approved foster carers are required to work with a Foster Carer Mentor as part of their induction.
- Fostering Service Development Days for foster carers, Panel Members and staff.
- Dedicated Lewisham fostering website- Fosternets for use by all foster carers.

Foster Carer Annual Reviews

Lewisham reviews foster carers at least once every 12 months to ensure Looked After Children are safeguarded and are developing appropriately and foster carers remain supported to provide high-quality care. Additional Foster Carer reviews can also be held if there has been a significant change in circumstances or if concerns arise.

The foster carer Annual Review considers the following:

The foster carer's previous 12 months of fostering.

Training attended and training needs.

Looked After Children's views and the views of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Child's Social Worker.

Foster Carer's views regarding the Fostering Service.

Statutory checks i.e. Disclosure, Barring & Service (DBS), medical, Police check and health & safety.

Progress and/or completion of TSD Standards.

Foster Carer Annual Review are generally carried out in the foster carer's home by the Supervising Social Worker. A competence-based model is used in relation to Annual Reviews, and foster carers are expected to give examples of how they have met the competencies in their practice and training attended, and reflection on learning and development needs.

All Foster Carer Annual Review are presented to and considered by the Fostering Team Managers. If there are any concerns then these are brought to the attention of the Service Manager.

All Foster Carer Annual Reviews of the first 12 months following foster carer approval are presented to the Fostering Panel and the carer is required to attend.

All subsequent foster carer Annual Reviews are also presented to the Fostering Panel and where a significant matter is proposed, such as a change of approval or serious concern, the foster carers are invited to attend. Where there are no issues then these reviews receive Quality Assurance by the Fostering Team Manager and Overview Scrutiny from the Fostering Panel. Foster Carer Agreements are also considered and signed off annually.

Guidance for Children & Young People.

Age appropriate Children's Guides and Young People's Guides have been produced for Looked After Children: My Guide To Foster Care.

The Work of the Fostering Service

Lewisham Fostering Service continually strives to improve outcomes for Looked After Children. Lewisham Fostering Service is

committed to continuous improvement in order to promote and achieve the desired outcomes for Looked After Children in line with the Every Child Matters Framework.

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We welcome and encourage expressions of interest to foster from all walks of life, because Lewisham is a great place to live, work and play!

How to Contact Lewisham Fostering Service.

Lewisham Fostering Service
1st Floor
Laurence House
1 Catford Road
London
SE6 4RU

Email:
CSCP&PbusinessSup@lewisham.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 8314 3663

For other formats, including Braille, large print, audio tape or computer disc please contact us.

Visit www.lewisham.gov.uk for all the latest news and information about your Council's services, and the range of job opportunities we currently have on offer.

Regulation and Inspection.

Details of the Office for Standards in Education & Skills (Ofsted):
Ofsted
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Telephone Number: 0300 123 1231

Contact Details for the Children's Rights Commissioner

Telephone Number: 0800 528 0731

