

Lewisham Fostering Service statement of purpose

2018–2019



In compliance with

Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and 2013

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011

Care Planning and Fostering Services Regulation 2015

Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England)
Regulations 2010 and 15



1 THE SERVICE

This Statement of Purpose sets out how the Lewisham Fostering Service works. It also includes information about the services, support and facilities available to foster carers including connected foster carers (Family & Friends). Lewisham Fostering Service is located at Laurence House in Catford, (opposite the Civic Centre) alongside all other Social Work teams. The Fostering Service operates in accordance with the Children's Act and all other legislation and regulations associated with the children in foster care. The service provides accommodation and care to children and young people in the care of the local authority.

The Fostering Service is committed to the following principles:

- Each child has their own individual needs and those should be recognised and met in the placement
- Good outcomes for children are achieved from quality placements
- Fostering placements work well if the individual needs of children are promoted and families of children in placement work together with the Fostering Service, social workers and foster carers
- Children must be cared for in a manner which respects their ethnicity, disability, religious and cultural beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age and social class
- We will work together for the best outcomes for children if the Fostering Service by valuing diverse carers who care for and meet children's needs and respect the variety of ways, and approaches adopted to accomplishing these tasks.

1.1 The Structure of the Service

The Fostering service consists of four main teams, namely;

- Recruitment and Assessment Team
- Fostering Support and Development Team 1
- Fostering Support and Development Team 2
- Connected Carers and Special Guardianship Team

The above listed teams work closely to ensure effective delivery of wraparound services for all children cared for by 'in-house' foster carers. The 'in-house' fostering service is complemented by a number of Independent (Private and Voluntary) Fostering Agencies.

1.2 Commitment to Equality and Diversity

The Fostering Service actively and consciously values diversity, difference, and seeks to provide a service underpinned by the principle of fairness and equal treatment of all carers, children and young people. Our approach to promoting equality and diversity is to ensure that the uniqueness and complexities of all children, young people and families are well understood and given due consideration whenever a child is matched with a foster carer.

The Fostering Service is committed to furthering equality by promoting diversity and striving to eliminate discrimination in all forms by prioritising the needs of children while recognising their carers as individuals who themselves may have needs. The service is also committed to raising the profile of equality and diversity issues across the Council.

2 FOSTERING SERVICES PROVIDED

The Fostering Service is providing a range of foster carers and a variety of fostering arrangements to children in Lewisham, namely;

2.1 Baby (Birth to 24 months) Foster Carers

These are carers who provide fostering services to children from Birth up to 2 years old. Baby carers must be available full time but are not required to have a spare bedroom provided that they have adequate space and can fit a cot in their own bedroom.

2.2 Permanent and Long-Term Foster Carers

These are carers who make a commitment to provide accommodation, care and support to children and young people, usually on full care orders, until they reach adulthood. They are invaluable resources to the children who are to remain in the care of the local authority until they reach adulthood.

2.3 Short Term Foster Carers

These are carers who take children on 'a single period' fostering usually up to three months or slightly longer. It includes placements where the plan is for a child to return home or move to an alternative permanent placement. These carers are usually task centred and are expected to work with a range of professionals to achieve the expected outcome. There are exceptional circumstances where a child may remain with such carers on a medium to long term basis, however, in such cases, it would be done in consultation and agreement with the foster carer.

2.4 Parent and Child Placements

These foster carers are specifically trained to care for children and their parents (mother and baby or father and baby) in the foster carer's household. There are rare occasions where the arrangement includes both parents. Parents and Child carers are trained to support parents on how to appropriately parent their children.

2.5 Parent & Child Placement Offer for Care Leavers

There are going to be care leavers who may become mothers in their transition to adult life. As corporate parents, except where pre-birth assessment has indicated that the unborn child is at risk, our role will be to offer support for them to care for their children. The offer and approach to supporting parents who are former care leavers or 'relevant' children would be,

wherever possible, foster carers supporting them in transition towards moving into the community with their children. Lewisham's approach is a model that assists and guides young parents to care for their own children with minimal intervention except where the child is or likely to be at risk. For example, there would be a general expectation for such parents to receive allowances including all the entitlements of the child and to provide for, and meet the child's needs as they would have done in their own accommodation. The Fostering Service also anticipates exceptional cases where both the baby and the mother may or may not be Looked After. In such cases, the arrangements shall be clarified with the social work team and carers to agree clear and mutually understandable expectations before the arrangement commences.

2.6 Parent and Child Arrangement in Court Proceedings

Parent and Child arrangements in court proceedings where the local authority is taking steps to safeguard the child shall be supported and monitored with carers taking an approach which assists the local authority to provide evidence to court in relation to carer's observation, records and judgement of mother / father's parenting capacity. Foster carers will therefore be offered training around observation skills, record keeping as well as court attendance and evidencing.

2.7 Family and Friends (Connected) Carers

This arrangement relates to carers approved to look after a specific child or children known to them as either family members or friends of their parents. These carers are usually family members and or friends who knew a child or children before they were accommodated by the local authority. There may be other Connected Carers where the connection may be as a result of being a previous foster carer to child's parent(s), a class teacher or learning mentor, etc. to the child or acquaintances formed as a result of the child being known to and friends of the proposed carers' own birth children. The Fostering Service actively encourages and promotes the use of Connected Carers wherever possible.

This arrangement often starts on the basis of Temporary Approval of Carers under Regulations 24 of Care Planning and Placement Review Regulations 2010. A full assessment and approval of Connected Carers is undertaken within 16 weeks in accordance with Standard 30 of the National Fostering Minimum Standards, 2011. Connected Carers are supported and managed in context of the same Fostering Policies, Standards and Regulations.

There is no difference between the role of a Connected Carer and a mainstream Foster Carer except that the former has prior knowledge of the child they are fostering. In practice, therefore, both Connected and Mainstream carers are registered as "Foster Carers" and are required to comply fully to expectations and functions outlined in the Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards. **All 'Temporary Approved Connected Carers' are allocated supervising social workers in accordance with the fostering regulations.**

2.8 Special Guardianship

The aim, from this year and beyond, is to extend to Special Guardians the same level of support as for Connected Carers in order to proactively improve stability in permanency for children who have exited care via Special Guardianship (SGO). Therefore, the current Connected Carers and Special Guardianship Assessment Team's role has been expanded to include support for special guardians after formal approval. The team manager will also hold overall responsibility for children who are subject to Residence and Child Arrangement Orders.

2.9 Staying Put

Lewisham has a Staying Put policy which encourages young people to remain with their former carers after their eighteenth birthday. This ensures that young people can remain with their former Foster Carers until they are well prepared and ready for adult life. There is a comprehensive Staying Put policy and procedure setting out the conditions and the associated financial implications. It is important to emphasise that young people in Staying Put arrangements are legally not looked after children and therefore, fostering arrangements no longer apply. While the legal basis on which they occupy the former foster care home changes, this does not mean that the young person should be treated differently; rather, 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.

The 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 does not have leave to remain and has exhausted all their rights to appeal, continued financial support will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

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

2.10 Supported Lodgings Scheme

The Fostering Service will be developing and expanding the current Supported Lodgings Scheme. The current scheme which is managed by the Placement Officer is being aligned to the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team. There will be named coordinators who will supervise the scheme providers as well as a senior social worker responsible for the supervision of the coordinators and development of the service. The coordinators will work closely with the child's Social Worker or Personal Advisor to ensure that the transition to independent living is achieved. **The current scheme which makes provision for young**

adults is being expanded to include sixteen and seventeen year olds (16+) transitioning to adult life.

3 NEW SERVICES

We have introduced a category of “Specialist Carers” who offer placements for more complex young people. These cover the following areas of fostering:

3.1 Remand Fostering

The fostering service aims to recruit and train specialist foster carers who can offer placements to young people who have been bailed or remanded into the care of the local authority by the police and courts respectively.

3.2 Specialist Carers for Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children (UASC)

The Fostering service aims to recruit and train specialist foster carers who can offer placements to unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children. These specialist carers will be provided with tailored guidance and support from the new UASC hub.

3.3 Therapeutic Foster Carers

Effective from December 2018, well trained and well prepared specialist foster carers will be available to provide bespoke therapeutic care to children displaying extreme and emotionally challenging behaviours. These children are often referred to as ‘difficult to place’ due to their high level of emotional needs and outburst. Therapeutic Foster Carers would be remunerated in context of the requirement to be available full time and work with a range of clinicians and professionals providing therapy and treatment to the children. Therapeutic Foster Carers would be required to support the children’s ‘therapy/treatment’ and ‘after treatment’ care which is very demanding therefore their role will demand a higher level of specialist learning, guidance and support to understand the language and the behaviour of traumatised children and young people. Therapeutic Foster Carers are required to take this role full time and must be available to take children either in an emergency or at short notice.

All Therapeutic Carers are required to undertake specific courses and training in addition to existing core training offered to all foster carers. A transparent Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Practice Expectation (PE) shall be used to vet Therapeutic Carers annually to facilitate non Therapeutic Carers advancing to this category as well as existing Therapeutic Carers who are not offering the service or those who no longer meeting the CPD/PE will be stepped down from therapeutic fostering capacity until such a time they meet expectations and are available and ready to offer the service.

4 THE ADVANCE FOSTERING SCHEME

A new scheme is being introduced for approved carers with good experience in challenging and complex placements. Foster Carers on the scheme shall be required to offer a 'holding and bridging placement' until a more suitable placement is identified. Advanced Foster Carers will also provide mentoring and support to newly approved Foster Carers. The advanced Fostering Scheme is limited to carers who can offer placement for children with complex emotional and behavioural needs- mostly teenagers but may include younger children on case by case basis. Advanced foster carers must also be available as 'Appropriate Adults' for children during police interviews and must be available to support young people's re-integration to education, training and employment.

Foster Carers on the Advance scheme will be paid an enhanced rate and a retention allowance when they do not have a placement. They are required to be available full time, out of hours, short notice and in an emergency and have to be ready to receive a placement in order to remain eligible for the retention allowance.

5 RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER CARERS

The Lewisham Fostering Service has re-established a Recruitment and Assessment Team and is currently on a drive to recruit more foster carers to meet its sufficiency targets. The new service has fully subscribed to the Stage 1 & Stage 2 fostering assessment process in accordance with the 2013 Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Regulation. Information days for potential Foster Carers will be held regularly at the Civic Centre and other strategic locations to assist interested but unsure applicants to learn more about the fostering role, assessment and approval process.

5.1 THE PROCESS

- **Stage 1 - Initial Enquiry and Acceptance of Application**

When an enquiry is received from a potential Foster Carer, an information pack is sent within forty eight (48) hours of the initial enquiry, providing the enquirer further details about the different types of fostering and the assessment process. A follow up call is made by the duty social worker within three working days and arrangement is made for a home visit to discuss the applicant's interest further.

Each applicant is expected to give consent for the Lewisham Fostering Service to undertake the following references and statutory checks:

- Disclosure and Barring Service checks – DBS (police references are obtained on all members of the household aged 18 years and over)
- Medical checks (the applicant's doctor will be asked to complete a health assessment report that will be forwarded to the Fostering Panel's medical advisor for review and comment)
- Local Authority checks (information held on children services database)
- Schools' and employers' checks

- Details of former partners where relevant
- References from all employers where the prospective carer(s) have work with children or other vulnerable groups
- A file review and references if carer(s) were previously approved by another fostering agency
- NSPCC checks
- Housing checks and reports

A decision to progress any application to stage two will be made upon receipt of all checks and references. However, there may be occasions where the stage one and two assessment shall progress simultaneously. In such situations, the applicant would be clearly informed and the process will comply with the Independent Review Mechanism principles.

- **Stage 2 - Assessment of Foster Carers**

Successful applicants from the Stage 1 process are required to attend Skills to Foster training as part of the assessment process. The Lewisham Fostering Service has a procedure in place for the assessment of Foster Carers which outline the process to be followed when assessing potential carers. It includes the requirement to complete and provide all the information as outlined in the Fostering Regulations 2011 & 2013. The full assessment is carried out by a qualified social worker. Whenever an assessment is completed, there is a mandatory requirement for the report to be shared with the applicant(s) to confirm factual accuracy of the information sourced or gathered. Applicants are required to comment and sign the report to verify that they have read and agreed with the contents before they can be invited to attend the Fostering Panel. The Stage 1 and 2 processes are completed within 16 weeks upon receipt of a viable inquiry. Every effort will be made to ensure there are no delays and applicants are given up to date progress of their application in writing, every four weeks, until the assessment is finalised.

- **Approval of Foster Carers**

All completed prospective Foster Carer's assessments are presented to the fostering panel for consideration and recommendation. The panel recommendations are communicated verbally to the applicants by the chairperson of the Fostering Panel on the day of the panel meeting. However, the Fostering Panel recommendations do not constitute a final decision of an applicant's suitability. All panel recommendations are forwarded to the Agency's Decision Maker who makes the final determination on suitability of a fostering application. Agency Decision Maker makes this determination within 7 days of receipt of recommendation and minutes from panel or IRM (if the case is heard at an IRM Panel). Applicants usually receive a verbal feedback regarding the decision within 2 days from receipt of the recommendation followed by a written outcome within 5 working days.

Where the Agency Decision Maker rejects an application or declines an approval recommendation, the applicant will have a right of appeal which shall be heard by an Independent Body through an Independent Reviewing Mechanism. Applicants who do not

agree with the Agency Decision Maker's decision which is also referred to as "qualifying determination", have 3 options;

- (a) accept the qualifying determination; or
- (b) make written representations to this fostering service provider; or
- (c) apply for the qualifying determination to be reviewed by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) Panel.

- **Pre-Panel Information to Applicants and Post Panel Feedback**

An information pack which outlines the roles, functions and membership of the fostering panel shall be made available to prospective applicants as soon as they are notified that their application is being presented to Independent Fostering Panel by the Panel Secretariat. Applicants who attend Fostering panel are required to complete a survey about their experiences of attending the Fostering Panel.

- **Fostering Agreement & Induction**

Each approved Foster Carer is required to sign a Foster Carer's Agreement and undertake mandatory induction course. The fostering agreement outlines the contractual relationship and agreement between the carer/s and the Authority. The induction sets out expectations of the Foster Carers' role.

6 MATCHING OF CHILDREN WITH FOSTER CARERS

The Fostering and Placement Service expects good needs assessment and clearly detailed and informative placement requests from children's social workers. This is crucial for a successful match between a child and Foster Carer(s). There is an established procedure in place to be followed in the matching process. The Fostering and Placement Service seeks to ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. Other information such as the child's care plan and recent written assessments of the child and their family are used to help make the right matches.

Good matches are achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant professionals, the child and her/his family and potential carers, their families and other children in placement. Placement Plans and Delegated Authority are also used to identify how the placement will meet the needs of the child being placed. Where there are gaps in meeting a child's need, this is discussed and plans to meet the need are put in place.

The Fostering and Placement Service shall consider the child's assessed needs including but not limited to racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, disability and linguistic needs and matched as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, race, religion, culture and language of the foster family. A planned introduction between the child and a new Foster Carer must take place within 7 days before the placement start date. However, this is not always possible when

emergency placements are made therefore efforts shall be made to reduce emergency placements to a minimum.

7 TRAINING OF FOSTER CARERS

The Fostering Service is committed to providing Continuous Professional Development and training opportunities for all Foster Carers, the Service believes that quality training is an integral part of a fostering career and begins during the assessment process with a 'Skills to Foster' course. All new Foster Carers are required to complete a minimum of four (4) mandatory Core Training and two (2) elective Programmes each year. Specialist Foster Carers, (e.g. Therapeutic, UASC, Remand, Parent and Child, etc.) are required to undertake further training in their area of specialisation in addition to the mandatory core training.

Foster Carer training needs are identified jointly with the carer's supervising social worker as part of the annual review process. Any training attended is added into the Foster Carer's training profile and considered as part of each carer's annual review process. Training may also count towards their professional qualification award and the mandatory Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for newly approved Foster Carers.

Lewisham recognises the skills of Foster Carers and value their experiences, we therefore actively encourage and promote the involvement of Foster Carers in delivering training events. We will provide tailored support such as 'Training for Trainers' courses for those who wish to undertake this task. We believe that this is an important way for carers to learn from each other, promoting partnership working between themselves, social care staff and other professionals. The Lewisham Fostering Service training programme covers a variety of subjects from basic to advanced level, and meets the requirements of the Training Support Development Standards (TSDS), which is statutory training for all Foster Carers.

8 SUPPORT PROVIDED TO FOSTER CARERS

Foster Carers receive regular visits from a supervising social worker. Each carer(s) is allocated a supervising social worker. The allocated worker is expected to be aware of the demands of each placement and would be available to offer telephone support and weekly monthly visits (4-weekly cycle) including a minimum of one unannounced visit annually. Each carer's supervising social worker has a duty to assess the needs of the carer and identify whether or not additional support and training may be required. Recordings are made about each supervisory visit using an agreed format and copies shared with carers for factual accuracy and information for sharing purposes. Foster Carers have access to 'Peer' and 'Facilitated' support groups. All Foster Carers have automatic membership subscription with the Fostering Network and are encouraged to join the Lewisham Foster Carers Association.

9 ANNUAL REVIEW, SPECIAL REVIEWS & REAPPROVALS

All Foster Carers will be reviewed in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations 2011. The Fostering Service is committed to a transparent Annual Foster Carer Review (AFCR) process which includes a self-assessment by Foster Carers, consultations and feedback from all members of Foster Carer households, children social workers and reviewing officers. The Annual Review meeting shall be held in the Foster Carer's home, attended by the supervising social worker and chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer who is also qualified (HCPC) Senior Social Worker with good fostering experience. Foster Carers are expected to evidence how they have met the competencies in their practice and reflect on how the training they have attended has helped to develop their skills, knowledge and experience. A reward scheme is linked to the annual review process.

The purpose of Annual Foster Carers Reviews (AFCR) is to ensure Foster Carer's standards are sufficiently robust to provide high-quality care.

The Foster Carer annual review considers the following:

- The Foster Carer's previous 12 months of fostering
- Training attended and training needs
- Progress and/or completion of TSDs
- 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), Police, Health and Safety, medical, pet
- Support group attendance and additional support required

The first annual review is presented to the Fostering Panel for approval. Thereafter, every third review will be presented to the panel unless there is an allegation or change of circumstance of the Foster Carer which will automatically trigger a special review process. All special reviews will be presented to the Independent Fostering Panel for a recommendation.

All panel recommendations in relation to the Annual Review process will be presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a Decision on re-approval. All successful applicants shall receive a written confirmation within 10 working days from the Panel date. The Service Manager will approve all Reviews which are not presented to the Independent Fostering Panel. It is important to emphasise that the process of Reviews that are not presented to the Fostering Panel will follow the same procedures in accordance with the regulations.

All approved Foster Carers are issued a Fostering Agreement which sets out the terms of their fostering arrangement with the council. The validity of each agreement will not exceed 12 months from the date of issue. The status of all Foster Carers (Standard, Therapeutic) will also be subject to annual reviews. The Fostering Service reserves the right to withdraw

the status of any Foster Carer who is not meeting the expected standard in writing with 28 days' notice period.

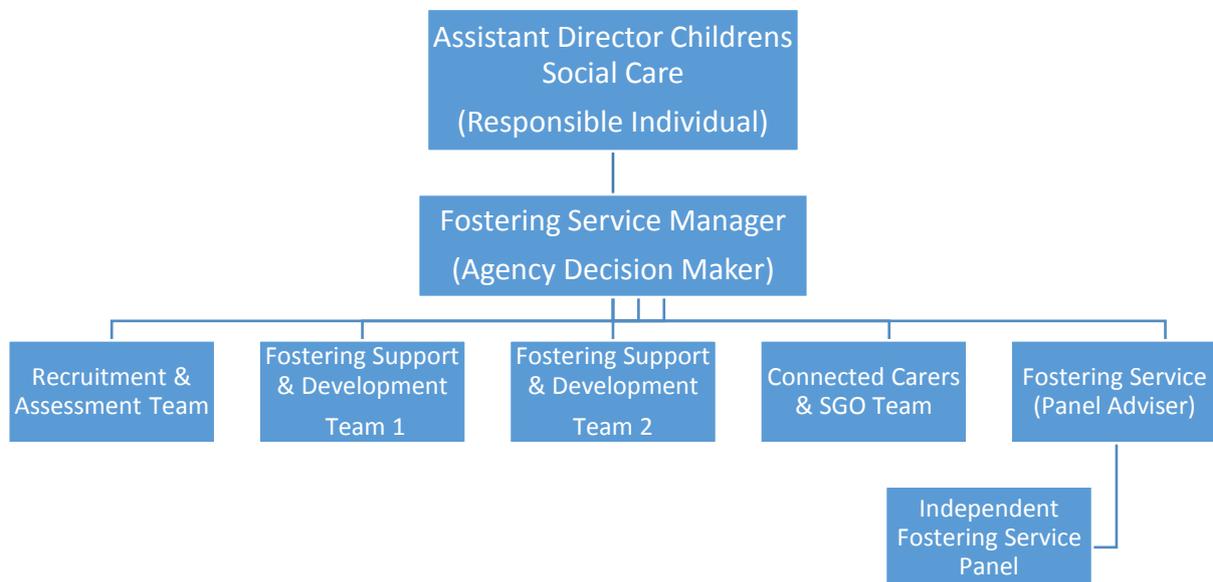
10 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF FOSTERING SERVICE

As the Fostering Services Regulations (FSR 2011) emphasise, we are committed to ensuring that all our staff are suitable to work with children and are qualified and trained, through skills, experience and qualifications to deliver an efficient and effective service.

11 RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL (RI) AND AGENCY DECISION MAKER (ADM)

The overall responsibility for the fostering service rests with the 'Responsible Individual' who is the Assistant Director Children's Social Care (Lucie Heyes). The Agency Decision Maker is the Service Manager for Fostering whose role it is to make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations/decisions in line with the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care. The Service Manager for Fostering also has the responsibility as defined in the Fostering Service Regulations as: 'the person tasked with oversight of the day to day operations of the fostering service'.

12 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



12.1 Current Management Team

- **Andrews Owusu Osei - Service Manager – (RI & ADM)**

Andrews is a qualified and HCPC registered Social Worker with over 13 years post qualified Senior Management experience. Andrews has been working with both Private and Local Authority Fostering and Placement Services as a member of the Senior Management Team responsible for Adoption, Fostering and LAC improvement projects. Andrews has also provided consultancy, advice, support and leadership to a number of local authorities and independent fostering agencies.

- **Ola Aregbesola – Manager; Fostering Support and Development Team 1**

Ola is a qualified and HCPC registered Social Worker since 2009. Ola 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 2010 as a Supervising Social Worker and later joined the Fostering Service Management Team in 2014. Ola has an ILM Level 3 award in Leadership and Management and has also recently completed the Level 5 award successfully. Ola manages one of the two teams of Social Workers who supervise, develop and support Lewisham Foster Carers and is the lead for the foster carer training and development programme.

- **Shahnaz Khan – Manager; Fostering Support Team 2**

Shahnaz is a qualified and HCPC registered Social Worker. Shahnaz has been working as a Qualified and HCPC Social Worker since 1999. Shahnaz, prior to qualifying, worked in a variety of posts in both the Voluntary and Statutory sector of Education, Health and Children Social Care. Shahnaz has worked for Lewisham Fostering Service since 2001, and has been panel advisor for fostering, and adoption panel members.

- **Tanya Gilzean – Manager; Connected Carers and Special Guardianship**

Tanya completed an MA Social Work in 2009 and a Post Graduate Certificate in Advanced Social Work (Practice Education) in 2016. Tanya has worked in social care settings for 14 years, including learning disabilities, in patient mental health, therapeutic social work and CAMHS. She has also spent a number of years doing independent assessing work in adoption, fostering and parenting as well as being a panel member, and Vice Chair of Lewisham's Fostering Panel. Tanya worked for 7 years for Lewisham's Adoption Team before joining Lewisham's Fostering Service in July 2018.

- **Tony Quinn – Interim Manager; Fostering Recruitment and Assessment**

Tony is a qualified and HCPC registered Social Worker. Tony was awarded an MSc (Oxon) CQSW in 1993. He has worked in a LAC team, generic teams, Child Protection Teams,

Fostering teams and Adoption teams. He has previously managed several local authority fostering services and adoption services, he joined the service in August 2018.

- **Bernard Burrell – Interim Fostering Panel adviser**

Bernard is a qualified and HCPC registered Social Worker. Bernard has been working as a Qualified and HCPC Social Worker since 1988. Bernard has worked as an Ofsted Inspector, Placement Manager, Agency Adviser (adoption and fostering) and as an independent Social Care Assessor.

13 THE STAFF (WORKFORCE)

All managers and social workers hold recognised social work qualifications and are registered with the, Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The Service Manager responsible for the Fostering Service reports to the Assistant Director of Children’s Social Care. All Team Managers and the Fostering Panel Adviser report directly to the Service Manager. There are about 120 registered fostering households. All fostering households have named social workers supervising their fostering activities. A fostering social worker supervises between 18-20 fostering households.

14 FOSTERING ALLOWANCE AND PAYMENTS SCHEME

Lewisham payments scheme is made up of two elements:

- The **Boarding Allowance element**: This payment is for the full maintenance and care of the fostered child. The boarding allowance is structured to meet a child’s needs over the medium to long term and includes costs towards birthdays, festivals and holidays. The same allowance is payable to Connected Foster Carers (Family and Friend foster carers.)
- The **Competence Payment element**: This payment is linked to Foster Carers availability and full compliance with the terms of the fostering agreement. Although the Competency Payment is a form of allowance, Foster Carers may be required to register as self-employed to pay the appropriate National Insurance Contribution and Tax. **Competency payments for Specialist Carers would be 30% higher than the standard rate to reflect the additional skills required to manage children presenting with extremely challenging behaviours.**

14.1 The Boarding Allowance Component

The allowance is intended to cover all of the general costs associated with the care of the child or young person. The allowance is aimed at maintaining an expected standard of care for the looked after child or young person. The allowance includes items that are purchased directly to meet the child’s needs such as food, clothing and social activities. It also covers indirect costs such as family transport, family outings and any additional general household

maintenance costs such as utilities and cleaning materials. It also includes costs associated with birthdays, festivals and holidays.

The table below outlines the items covered by the Allowance for looked after children and young people.

Table 1 – Items covered in the boarding allowance

Item	Percentage (%)
Food – including school meals	25
Leisure and activities, including birthday, festivals and holidays	20
Clothing	15
Household	15
Health and Hygiene	5
Transport	5
Pocket money	5
Savings	5
Babysitting	5

Whilst the table above sets out a general guide for spending per item, it is understood that the needs of children and young people of the same age group can vary widely and foster carers are responsible for using their discretion to ensure that the child or young person’s overall needs are met. For example, some expenditure on items may not change from month to month e.g. food, however expenditure on items such as clothing and utilities may vary. The carer is expected to budget for these variations in expenditure.

If the carer’s expenditure on the child or young person differs significantly from the proportions set out in the table above, the Supervising Social Worker will discuss the carer’s expenditure at a supervisory visit. This will assist the Foster Carer to budget accordingly or assist the Social Worker to determine if any additional financial support is required. The basic expectations for spending on each item are outlined below.

- **Food** - Children and young people should receive dinner money or a packed lunch as is appropriate to their needs and preferences. They should be provided with breakfast before school and a meal in the evening. Healthy drinks and snacks should be made available within reason.
- **Health and hygiene** - Young people who have reached puberty will need an allowance to buy toiletries such as sanitary towels, pads, deodorant and shaving equipment etc.
- **Clothing** - It is important that children and young people are provided with sufficient shoes and clothes appropriate to their age. Carers should provide opportunities for children and young people to be involved in choosing and buying clothes as they get older. It is expected that foster carers would provide a young person aged thirteen and

over with money to buy some clothes for themselves from the basic allowance with guidance.

- **Pocket money** - It is important that children have some understanding of the responsibilities of looking after their own money from the age of seven years. Prior to this, children's pocket money should be spent under the supervision of the foster carer or kept as savings. Foster carers are responsible but shall consult the child's social worker in determining the exact amount of pocket money and savings as this will sometimes need to be considered in light of what is reasonable within the fostering family and the child's level of maturity. Carers are expected to help children to learn about savings as part of preparation for adulthood. It is therefore important for the carer to assist the child in opening up a savings account, such as a post office account, into which the child can save an element of their pocket money.
- **Savings** - The Fostering Service has an expectation that carers will open a savings account in the child's name for the sole purpose of saving the minimum amount of funds as set out in the allowance breakdown. This savings account is maintained and held by the carer until such time that the child becomes eligible for a government backed Shared Foundation ISA Account. – **All children eligible for the ISA account will have their savings paid directly to the account by a standing order (bank transfer).**

14.2 Fostering Allowance Payment

Fostering allowances will be paid weekly directly into Foster Carers bank accounts. There are cut-off periods for payment. The details of payment arrangements will be made available to all carers annually.

15 PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

The Fostering Service prepares and encourages Foster Carers to promote and support each child's educational achievement whilst in placement. Foster Carers are supported through training and ongoing support to provide home environments that stimulate, encourage and value the experience of learning and educational achievements. The Fostering Service expects that children social workers shall consult and include Foster Carers in the educational plans for the children in their placement. Foster Carers would be expected to be invited to Educational Planning Meetings, Education Review Meetings, Parents Evenings and School Activity /Open Days. **All newly approved Foster carers shall be supported financially to purchase a standard computer to support the education of fostered children.**

16 PREPARATION FOR ADULT LIFE

Foster Carers are expected to provide young people with positive life experiences, information, skills and advice that will support them in this objective. A comprehensive training programme has been designed to support Foster Carers to develop their skills on

how best to help young people prepare for adulthood and independent living. The aim of the Fostering Service is to improve choices for young people through; Staying Put, Supported Lodging and other bespoke provisions that will meet the individual's needs. Each young person is therefore consulted by the supervising social worker about their considered options when the preparation for Pathway Planning is started. It is the service's expectation that Foster Carers are always consulted and involved in the process of moving children and young people on to begin their adult life.

17 CONTACT

The expectation is that Foster Carers will actively support, promote and facilitate safe contact between children, young people and their family and friends so that children will experience, as closely as possible, normal family life. Foster Carers are also encouraged and supported to promote contact and friendships as set out in the children placement plans.

18 CHILDREN'S HEALTH

The Fostering Service promotes the health and development needs of children and young people living in foster care. There is an expectation that the health information for each child is provided to Foster Carers prior to the child being placed and no later than seven (7) working days, if the information is not readily available at the point of placement. It is an expectation that all children and young people placed are registered with a GP and dentist close to the Foster Carers home, if they are not already registered. Foster Carers are required to complete the children's mental health screening tool (SDQ). Foster Carers are also aware of their obligation and responsibility to support children to attend medical, dental and other health care appointments.

19 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The service recognises the rights of children and young people and discusses with Foster Carers the rights of a child. **All young people in foster care have access to a named person responsible for seeking and promoting their rights.** The person shall provide ongoing support and advocacy for looked after young people as well as ensuring that they are provided with a copy of the children's guide and complaint procedure. Children shall be consulted and their views incorporated in the delivery of service to ensure effectiveness in the day to day running of the Fostering Service.

20 SAFEGUARDING

The service complies with the Pan London Child Protection Procedures and its own associated procedures in all areas of child protection. The Pan London Procedures reflect all relevant law, regulation, statutory and non-statutory Government guidance and best practice in London. This document complements the key government document 'Working Together to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children 2018'. Key themes such as; child protection procedures, safer caring, children missing from care would be reviewed during monthly supervision and within the annual review process.

21 ALLEGATIONS, COMPLAINTS CONCERNS AND COMPLIMENTS

The Fostering Service has updated its procedures regarding allegations, complaints and concerns against Foster Carers Procedure. The Fostering Service has aims to respond to any allegation or complaint within 14 days but not exceeding 28 days. The service recognises that there are some allegations and complaints that may require complex investigation which could take longer than 28 days. In such cases, the Fostering Manager would be required to formally communicate to the person(s) involved - explaining the nature and complexity with anticipated timelines. This shall be followed up with periodical updates, keeping all parties informed with progress until the matter is concluded. Depending on the nature of the allegation or complaint, for example, child protection enquiry, the regulator (Ofsted) and the Local Safeguarding Board of the Area Authority shall be notified accordingly.

The Fostering Service welcome compliments and well as constructive feedback on what we do well and areas we should improve. All compliments and feedback should be sent directly to the Manager of the Fostering Service.

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 and the Fostering Team 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 the Fostering Network including unlimited Foster Line telephone support.

22 FOSTER CARERS RECORDINGS

Foster Carers are expected to keep a daily log for each child in placement. Separate recordings must be done if more than one child is in placement. Foster Carers are offered training on keeping records and their importance.

23 CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICE

The Fostering Service's vision is in line with Lewisham Council's vision to work seamlessly and cohesively to deliver an excellent service designed around the needs of our customers, in accordance with council policies and priorities. The Service considers recruitment and retaining Foster Carers as pivotal priority in achieving quality care and support for children who are cared for by the Council.

24 REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In accordance with the Fostering Service Regulation, 2011, this Statement of Purpose shall be reviewed annually.

25 STAKE HOLDERS CONSULTATION

The Lewisham Fostering and Placement Service is positioning itself as a listening service and open to further learning and development. We shall therefore peer review our practices with best performing fostering agencies. We shall also make a concerted effort to solicit suggestions, feedback, comments and views from all relevant persons, professionals and key partners.

Although not limited to them, the following are considered as stakeholders and an extension of the service and as such feedback shall be solicited formally through consultation meetings, surveys, surgeries, and commentary from:

- Foster Carers
- Care Leavers
- Fostered Children
- Children Social Workers
- Supervising Social Workers
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Health Professional
- Education Professionals
- Councillors
- Panel Members
- Family and Friends Carers
- Birth children of Foster Carers
- Children in Care Council
- Lewisham Foster Care Association
- Lewisham Safeguarding Board

26 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

Ofsted Contact

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester M1 2WD

125 Kingsway

London

WC2B 6SE

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

APPENDIX 1 SERVICE STRUCTURE

