

**London Borough of Bromley
Children, Education and Families
Children's Social Care**

Bromley Fostering Service

***Statement of Purpose
2023-2024***

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The Bromley Fostering service is committed to complying with the standards set out in the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011) which are underpinned by the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and 2013 and form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000.

The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards, 2011, Section 16, states that every Fostering Service should have a clear statement of purpose which is available to, and understood by, foster carers, staff and children and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility.

1. Aims, values and objectives of the Local Authority in relation to the Fostering Service

1.1 Mission Statement

We believe that children are best cared for in their own families. However, where this is not possible, we strive to ensure that children have an experience of family life where they are safe, nurtured and respected for as long as necessary and where all their needs, including their racial and cultural identity needs, are met. We accept that for some children the experience of family life is not appropriate because of the effects of past trauma. Every child should be able to experience a secure and happy family life being safely cared for by a loving adult or adults. We strive to achieve this through providing a responsive and effective service to individuals and families from all backgrounds involved in fostering.

1.2 Values

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care.
- Children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs.
- Every child should have his or her wishes and feelings listened to and taken into account.
- Each child should be valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background in order to develop their identity, self-confidence and self-worth.
- The particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and taken into account.
- The significance of contact for children looked after, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, half-siblings and grandparents, is recognised, as is the foster carer's role in this.
- Children in foster care deserve to be treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity to have a full experience as possible of family life and childhood, without unnecessary restrictions.
- The central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer should be acknowledged and foster carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child.
- All fostering decisions must focus on the interests of the child.
- Foster carers have a right to relevant information about the child.
- It is essential that foster carers receive relevant support services and development opportunities in order to provide the best care for children.
- Partnership between all those involved in fostering children is essential to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, Fostering Service providers and foster carers.

1.3 Aims

- 1.3.1 To provide a high-quality Fostering Service where all people are responded to promptly, treated courteously and fairly, and given equal consideration regardless of ethnic background, age, marital status, religion, language, sexual orientation and disability. The Department will take the necessary steps to ensure applicants have equal access, e.g., regarding physical access to buildings or religious/language differences. The Department aims to provide a comprehensive Fostering Service in co-operation with other teams and Departments, birth families and other service users to ensure there is a coherent local service to meet identified needs of children in the care of the Local Authority.
- 1.3.2 To provide a comprehensive Fostering Service to meet the needs of children, birth families and social work staff by recruiting sufficient in-house foster carers to meet the needs of the local community.
- 1.3.3 To ensure that the needs, wishes and safety of the children looked after are at the centre of the fostering process and that the views of children looked after, their parents and carers are actively sought and listened to.
- 1.3.4 To provide as far as is reasonably possible practical support and services which will enable the child to return to, or remain with, his/her family of origin, except in those circumstances where it is considered that it would be detrimental to the child's welfare, due to issues of significant harm.
- 1.3.5 In making plans for the fostering placement for a child looked after, the Department's first aims are to ensure:
 - a) the child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted throughout their placement
 - b) that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of the placement.
- 1.3.6 To ensure that people interested in becoming foster carers will be welcomed without prejudice, responded to promptly and given clear information about the recruitment, assessment and approval process. They will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the process of becoming a foster carer.
- 1.3.7 To match children with approved foster carers who will ensure that their identity, including racial and ethnic identity, is promoted and contact with their birth family is maintained, and that there is minimum disruption to continuity of education and established social contacts and activities.
- 1.3.8 To recruit suitably qualified and experienced people to deliver the Fostering Service who will provide services to ensure compliance with all required safety checks.
- 1.3.9 To ensure that the Fostering Service is resourced to meet the above aims and that the premises from which the Fostering Service operates are fit for their purposes.
- 1.3.10 To assess and, where appropriate, approve prospective Foster-Carers within stipulated timescales.
- 1.3.11 To provide a rigorous training and support programme in order that our carers can enhance their skills.

1.4 Objectives

- 1.4.1 The Department will ensure that the above aims are met through compliance with the specific objectives stated in:
- The Children Act 1989
 - Every Child Matters 2004
 - The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010
 - The Care Standards Act 2000
 - The Fostering Services Regulations 2011
 - The Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011
 - Amendments to Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers Guidance and Regulations and Statutory Guidance July 2013
 - Departmental Policies and Procedures, including the Placement Policy

1.5 Facilities of the Fostering Service

- 1.5.1 The Fostering Service is provided through staff from within the Children's Social Care Division of the Education, Care and Health Services Department, and in particular, staff within the Permanency Service.
- 1.5.2 The offices of the Permanency Service are based in the Civic Centre, Bromley. Interview, meeting and training rooms are provided on the Civic Centre site although fostering functions are currently being delivered via a hybrid model with in person visits and virtual meetings and training.
- 1.5.3 In addition to the main customer database and information system used by the Department, the Permanency Service has and continues to develop management information processes that assist and reflect the needs of the service.
- 1.5.4 The Permanency Service undertake fostering assessments; connected persons fostering and special guardianship assessments, support of carers as well as the court report and welfare supervision work in partner and non-agency adoptions.
- 1.5.5 The Fostering Service has access to the Authority's Medical Adviser and the Senior Solicitor within Legal Services whose responsibilities include advising the Fostering and Connected Persons Panel and offering advice and consultation to social work staff, other professionals and foster carers.
- 1.5.6 The Permanency Service makes use of other Council Departments, as required, to support planning and delivery of services.
- 1.5.7 The Fostering Service works in partnership with the foster carers via the Fostering Advisory Partnership and regularly consults and canvasses their views to ensure that the service to foster carers remains effective and responsive, with professional working relationships in place between staff and carers.
- 1.5.8 The Department holds membership of the Fostering Network and CoramBAAF.

1.6 Services provided

- Advice and information on fostering, including providing a Duty System for the Department when referrals are made, and requesting placements for children both in the short-term or on a planned basis.
- Initial assessments by fostering staff to identify the motivation and ability of prospective carers to provide a safe caring environment for a child.
- Skills to Foster training.
- Comprehensive preparation and assessment for prospective foster carers.
- All assessments of prospective foster carers to be presented to the Fostering and Connected Persons Panel for a recommendation to be put forward to the Department's Decision Maker within stipulated timescales.
- Provision of a Supervising and Support Social Worker (SSW) to work in partnership with the child's social worker and foster carer.
- An allocated social worker from the Fostering Team to family find for individual or sibling groups of children requiring permanency via long term fostering.
- Planned general and specific recruitment programmes for foster carers for individual and specific groups of children.
- Advice and provide information on services for foster carers to assist them in their care of children placed with them.
- Advice and provide information to other professionals working with children.
- Support for birth families.
- Fostering social workers will attend with their foster carers all Child Protection Conferences and Children looked after (CLA) Reviews.
- Fostering Support Meetings to provide training programmes for foster carers to enhance their skills and to achieve the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS).
- A quarterly newsletter.
- The Bromley Fostering and Connected Persons Panel fulfils its statutory functions as required and offers advice and consultation to social work staff on fostering matters.
- Services of Medical and Legal Advisers for advice, information and consultation in addition to their specific roles and functions.
- Membership of the Fostering Network and CoramBAAF, and attendance at functions arranged by these agencies.
- Comprehensive post approval training programme for foster carers.
- Therapeutic support to our fostering placements via our own Therapeutic service delivering a variety of therapy packages: Video-feedback Intervention to promote Positive Parenting (VIPP), Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), Theraplay, Identify Work, Life Story work, Great Behaviour Breakdown (GBB), Virtual Reality

1.7 Purpose of the Fostering Team

The Fostering Team is responsible for all the work undertaken with foster carers approved by the Department in order to:

- Increase the number of in-house foster carers to a level that reflects the needs of Bromley children received into public care and to ensure these carers reflect the racial and cultural origins of Bromley children looked after.
 - Recruit and approve foster carers in Bromley or nearby so that the Fostering Service provided to children looked after is local and causes minimum disruption to aspects of their life such as education and training.
- Positively encourage the placement of children within the extended family if they are not able to live with their birth parent(s).
- Support these connected persons placements and to approve and support these family members as foster carers for specific children.
- Recruit foster carers who will provide respite fostering for disabled children and to approve and support them.
- Comply with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and the Minimum Standards contained therein, including Amendments to Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers Guidance and Regulations July 2013
- Work in partnership with other teams in Safeguarding and Social Care.
- Work in partnership with the Children's Commissioning Team in identifying and meeting the placement needs of Bromley's children looked after.
- Work closely in partnership with colleagues from other agencies such as Health, Education, Youth Justice etc.

2 Procedures for Recruiting, Preparing, Assessing and Approving Prospective Foster Carers

2.1 Recruitment

- 2.1.1 There is ongoing general recruitment for foster carers who will be able to meet the needs of children in Bromley. There are also targeted recruitment campaigns for specific age ranges and/or specific children needing foster placements. The Group Manager for Recruitment and Assessments in the Permanency Service, the Marketing Officer and the Head of Service for Permanency plan and put into operation this strategy.
- 2.1.2 Our website and Digital Marketing Agencies are in operation to attract new prospective foster carers.
- 2.1.3 Prospective applicants can dial a recruitment line; download information and an initial enquiry form from the web; email the Department or attend information sessions held throughout the year.

- 2.1.4 A dedicated Recruitment and Marketing Officer and Recruitment Coordinator manage all enquiries for information about fostering in Bromley and sends out information upon request.
- 2.1.5 The Fostering Team, via dedicated duty time, aims to respond to all enquiries within one day.

2.2 Assessment Stage 1

- 2.2.1 If people want to proceed from their enquiry, they are asked to make a formal application and participate in an initial assessment with our fostering worker. To speed up the process, references, medical reports, DBS checks and any other relevant information is concurrently sought by the Fostering Service.
- 2.2.2 From the information gleaned, the allocated social worker will complete an initial assessment and pass their written report to the Team Manager, Recruitment and Assessment team. If the latter confirms that the applicants have the motivation and experience, together with the space and time to foster, they are asked to attend a Skills to Foster training programme (preparation group).
- 2.2.3 Preparation groups are run at least four times a year and are run on different days of the week and times in the year to facilitate attendance.
- 2.2.4 At least two fostering social workers and a foster carer facilitate every preparation group and follow an agreed programme of content which follows the 'Skills to Foster' course. Comprehensive information is given to participants to ensure that they learn about all aspects of fostering.
- 2.2.5 Prospective foster carers complete evaluation forms and these are considered by the fostering social workers and the Team Manager. The social workers facilitating the course will produce a report on the interaction of the applicants during the preparation training which will go towards their overall assessment.
- 2.2.6 Candidates can withdraw at any point. If the candidates are not considered suitable at this stage, a letter confirming the outcome will reach them within ten days of the decision being made. The applicants can access Bromley's Complaints Process if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

2.3 Assessment Stage 2

- 2.3.1 In many cases, where possible, this overlaps with Stage 1 in order to speed up the assessment process.
- 2.3.2 A comprehensive fostering assessment is undertaken using the CoramBAAF Form 'F'. All members of the household are seen individually as well as in a family group. Three personal references are sought, one of which can be a family member. Ex-partners are contacted in relation to an applicant's capacity to parent, if there have been any children from that relationship. Adult children who are not living within the home are also contacted.
- 2.3.3 The Form 'F' is shared with the applicant(s) so that they can make factual corrections and observations on the report prior to it being submitted to Panel.
- 2.3.4 The assessing social worker receives regular supervision throughout the assessment.
- 2.3.5 If at any time during Stage Two, there are concerns about the competence of participants, then a brief report will be presented to Panel. If the Panel and the

Agency Decision Manager confirm that the candidates are unsuitable, the candidates have the right to make representations to the Panel or to use the Independent Review Mechanism if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

2.4 Approval

- 2.4.1 The assessing social worker prepares the applicant(s) for attending Bromley's Fostering and Connected Persons Panel. A leaflet and evaluation form has been designed to assist in this preparation.
- 2.4.2 The Assessment Report, together with any written observations or representations, is submitted by the assessing social worker to the Panel.
- 2.4.3 The Panel's recommendations are then passed to the Agency Decision Maker to make the final decision. The performance standard here is to make the decision within seven working days of the panel.
- 2.4.4 The decision is sent to the foster carer(s) within seven working days of it being made.
- 2.4.5 If the Agency Decision Maker does not agree for the applicants to be approved, they are notified in writing. They will then have 28 days to make representations to the Panel or use the Independent Review Mechanism.

2.5 Timescales

A full assessment should be undertaken which allows the Panel to make their recommendation within three months of the applicant's initial inquiry.

3 Support for Foster Carers

- 3.1 Following approval, all foster carers will have an allocated Supervising Social Worker (SSW) who supports and supervises them.
- 3.2 The SSW supports the foster carer by providing information about policy and procedures, relevant legislation and resources within and outside the Department.
- 3.3 A child placed with foster carers also has an allocated social worker who offers support to the child and to the foster carers in their caring for the child.
- 3.4 A range of fostering support services are made available to foster carers:
 - The SSW supports the carer in their work, including the impact of fostering on the wider family.
 - The SSW will undertake direct work with the child /children of the carer.
 - Foster carers meet a minimum of six times a year in support groups. They can access the training programme set up for all workers in the Safeguarding and Social Care Division. In addition, specific training courses are run to enhance foster carers' skills.
 - The SSW ensures that the foster carer meets all the standards of care set by the Department and is responsible for assisting the carer in the development of their competencies and their career as carers.
 - The SSW will undertake supervision with the carers every 4 weeks.
 - A quarterly newsletter.

- Access to services of Medical and Legal Advisers for advice, information and consultation in addition to their specific roles and functions.
- Financial support — foster carers will be paid an allowance as stated in the current policy on payments.
- Specialist therapeutic support to children and their foster carers through CAMHS or Thrive, our therapeutic service.
- Specialist Education and Health teams.
- Funding for specific areas of work with the child and their foster carer e.g., identity work
- Assistance from the Fostering Service in ensuring that the views of the foster carer are heard in relation to care planning for a child in their care.

4 Complaints Procedure

Complaints Officer: CSC Complaints, 3rd Floor, Stockwell Building, Bromley, BR1 3UH Tel: 020 8461 7644

Email: cypsocialecomplaints@bromley.gov.uk

All carers and applicants are given a copy of the Department's Complaints Procedure, 'Getting it Right' if they feel they have been treated unfairly. However, we endeavour to reach a reconciliation with complainants before it becomes necessary to make a complaint.

- 4.3 Applicants who have completed Stage Two of the Assessment but are subsequently not considered suitable as foster carers may make representations to Panel or access the Independent Review Mechanism.
- 4.4 If complainants feel we have not addressed their complaint, they are informed of their right to complain further to Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231.

5. Miscellaneous

- 5.1 The Children's Guide has been updated by the Living in Care Council.
- 5.2 An Information Leaflet for carers attending the Joint Panel is available to help prepare for attendance, as well as an evaluation form for comments on their experience of attending Panel.

Organisation of Structure of the Fostering Service

Bromley Education and Care Services is part of Bromley Council and is managed by the Executive Director of Education, Care and Health Services, Ade Adetosoye OBE. The Children's Social Care Division, as part of ECS, is responsible for the delivery of the Fostering Service.

Within the Children's Social Care Division, there are specialist teams dealing with Referral and Assessment (area teams), Safeguarding and Care Planning (area teams), Quality Assurance, Children Looked After, Leaving Care, Adoption, Commissioning, Youth Justice Service and Teenage and Parent Support.

Social Workers for children requiring a foster placement for a child are located in the children's teams. The Fostering Service is part of the Permanency Service and sits within the Care and Resources Service, thereby maintaining close links with the Adoption Connected Persons and Special Guardianship Teams.

The Bromley Fostering Service is responsible for establishing, maintaining, and servicing the Bromley Fostering and Connected Persons Panel. The Panel, in carrying out its regulatory functions, makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker, (Richard Baldwin - Director for Children's Social Care).

The work and performance of the Fostering and Connected Persons Panel is included in the report on Fostering Activity submitted to the Care Services Portfolio Holder and the Corporate Parenting Executive.

Adoption of the Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose of the Fostering Service is contained and expanded within the Fostering Policies and Procedures.

The Policies and Procedures and the Statement of Purpose contained have been placed before Council members and fully endorsed and supported.

The Statement of Purpose will accompany the Annual Report of the Fostering Service and will be presented to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services.

Fostering Advisory Partnership (FAP)



Bromley has a Fostering Advisory Partnership - this is a forum which maximises the welfare of children within our care through good partnership working with our foster families. It is a new approach to joint working between our Foster Carers representatives and management, and regular meetings take place to ensure that the voice of the foster carer is heard, and decisions can be made.

London Permanency Partnership

Bromley are also part of London Wide Permanency Partnership in connection with other Local Authorities. The Partnership shares good practice, knowledge and skills to improve our service.

APPENDIX 1 – QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Group Managers within the Permanency Service have oversight of supervision undertaken by team managers for all staff in the Permanency Service. All staff are seen in supervision on a four-weekly basis. Supervision and line management practice follows the Divisional Supervision Policy and Management Standards.

Permanency Service staff and social workers are provided with supervision by either the Group Manager or Team Manager within the Fostering Team under the terms of their agreement for service.

Copies of the signed supervision notes are placed on the relevant electronic file with any agreed actions noted.

Currently files are always seen, read and agreed for closure by the Group Manager Permanency Service. In addition, files are read and signed on an occasional basis. A quality assurance audit is undertaken on a regular basis.

The Panel Adviser to the Fostering and Connected Persons Panel reads all Forms 'F', the child permanency records and matching reports on foster carers and children and provides an important quality assurance role prior to presentation of reports at Panel.

The Fostering Panel provides a quality assurance function which is exercised through individual recommendations on cases presented and recorded in the Panel Minutes and Panel Decision Sheet, together with advice from medical, legal and other advisors to Panel.

The Group Manager Permanency Service is supervised on a regular, four-weekly basis by the Head of Service-Permanency.

An annual report on fostering activity is produced and submitted to both the Care Services Portfolio Holder and the Fostering Panel annually.

In line with requirements, the Fostering Service will be inspected by Inspectors appointed by Ofsted under the Care Standards Act 2000.

All foster carers are supervised and supported by an allocated Supervising Social Worker, annual review of foster carers includes contribution from the foster carers, child(ren)'s Social Worker, IRO and foster child will contribute to this. The first and third annual review is presented to the Fostering Panel and thereafter is presented once every three years. All other reviews are presented to the Agency Decision Maker. Reviews are carried out earlier than one year if there are concerns or issues the Fostering Panel should be made aware of.

Carers are sent questionnaires independent of their reviews as part of the on-going consultation process to ensure the service is effective and responsive.

APPENDIX 2 – OUR PROMISE TO CARERS



Our innovative support services:

- Respect and value you
- Listen and engage you
- Create opportunities for you
- Support you and our children