



Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2005-2006



Introduction

The overarching aim of the Brent placements service is to provide safe and appropriate placements for Brent's looked after children.

Brent is committed to promoting diversity and to ensuring that all children and families have access to services in the borough. This includes access to the specialist placements service for children when they can no longer be cared for by their own family.

In the first instance the placements service will explore the possibility of finding an alternative home within a child's extended family or with any member of their community with whom they may have a special relationship. The Council will seek to support and enhance these relationships by means of encouraging people to take up residence orders or by a long term fostering relationship and by paying an allowance where necessary. The Council will also seek to involve the child's family in the planning for the child. Where necessary the Council will consider holding Family Group conferences so that the entire extended family may be involved in the planning for the child.

Where it is not possible to place a child within their own family or community, the Council will look to finding carers outside of the child's community through adoption , long term foster care , short term foster care or residential care to meet the child's needs for protection and stability.

This Statement of Purpose relates to Brent's fostering service under the requirements of the Fostering Services regulations 2002.

Overall Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the Brent Fostering service fit with a number of local and national aims and objectives. These include objectives found in Brent's corporate strategy 2002-06, corporate improvement plan 2004-06, Social services improvement plan 2004-2005 and the national objectives of the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Department of Health National Minimum Standards, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

The council's corporate values underpin the aims and objectives of the fostering service. Supporting children and young people to improve their outcomes and life chances is one of the main aims.

The aims and objectives of Brent's fostering service are to:

- Provide safe and appropriate placements for children who are looked after by Brent. An environment that is nurturing and promotes their physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual development. Ensuring that they are encouraged to reach their full potential.
- Explore the possibility of finding an alternative home within a child's extended family or with any member of their community with whom they may have a special relationship
- Work in partnership with prospective carers, children and their families, colleagues, other professionals and agencies. Promoting and developing high standards in the placement of children and avoiding all unnecessary placement moves.
- Take a child centred approach to finding placements ensuring their welfare and safety is paramount. This includes actively seeking and taking into account the child's wishes and feelings in age appropriate ways.
- Consider fostering as a positive option for all looked after children in Brent who are unable to live with their birth family.
- Ensure that all Brent placements with independent providers are contracted and maintained appropriately.
- Valuing a child's cultural, ethnic religious and linguistic background is seen as very important and the service does not discriminate against any aspect of their identity. Usually it is in the child's best interests to be placed with a family which shares this background. If this is not possible we will find a placement or carer who can meet these needs.

- Prioritise recruiting and assessing foster carers who are most likely to meet the needs of local children who need families.
- Make sure children with disabilities who need placements receive equitable services to meet their individual needs.
- Provide respite care for children with disabilities.
- Ensure that the needs of looked after children are matched and met within the placements made. Consideration will be given to the child's educational needs in deciding placements.
- Place brothers and sisters together. If this is inappropriate or impossible, we will carefully consider possibilities for maintaining contact between siblings.

Principles of the Fostering Service

The key principles that underpin the placements service that we provide children and families in Brent are set out below.

- The fostering service will ensure there is a range of safe and appropriate placements for the Looked After Children in Brent.
- All placements are monitored and supervised
- All foster placements provide a safe secure environment for children placed
- Children will be matched with carers who are best able to meet the identified needs of the Child
- Life skills and opportunities are made available to all children appropriate to their age and developmental need
- The service operates within the framework of equality of opportunity
- The service recognises and values the diverse nature of the community it serves.
- To take the views of children and young people seriously and to enable them to be part of any decision making process that affects them
- To ensure staff are well trained and competent in delivering a quality fostering service.
- There are clear lines of accountability and management of an service
- All staff and carers have a valid CRB checks which is satisfactory
- Staff and carers receive support and supervision
- The health, educational and social needs of children are met within placements
- Allegations against carers/staff will be investigated under departmental procedures
- The fostering service is committed to meeting and enhancing the learning and developmental needs of staff and carers.
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for the support of foster carers ensuring each foster carer has access to supervising social worker.
- The fostering service ensures that there are comprehensive and up to date records on all children placed and on all foster carers. This information is accessible in line with the Data Protection Act 1998..

- The fostering service has clear administrative records and financial management systems pertinent to the running of the service.
- The fostering service operates a fostering panel that provides a quality assurance role with regards to the recruitment and review of foster carers and foster placements. The panel will ensure the welfare and safety of children is paramount in all decision making.

The Organisational Structure Of The Service

The fostering service is part of the Placements Service within the Family Support Division of the Children and Families Department.

Management structure

See Appendix 1

Staffing and Qualifications

The service unit manager of Children's placement services Ms .Jan Fishwick is responsible for the fostering service. The service consists of three teams; the Intake and Referral team, Fostering assessment team, Long Term Fostering Team. These are managed by three different managers who are based at Triangle House, 328 - 330 High Road, Wembley HA9 6AZ.

The qualifications of the managers and their experience are shown in detail below:

Position in the Unit	Hours per week	Name	Year of appointment	Qualifications
Service Manager	36	Jan Fishwick	2001	CQSW Currently completing MPA
Team Manager	36	Dyelia Morgan	2002	CQSW
Team Manager	36	Andrea Robertson	2002	CQSW
Acting Team Manager	36	Janine Pokroy	2005	Degree in social work BA (Hons)

How Brent Placement Service Operates

The placement service works in collaboration with the area children's social work teams to ultimately ensure welfare of children placed. We aim to work together with other professionals within and outside the council to achieve the best outcomes for looked after children in Brent. We work within a child centred, multi-disciplinary and anti-discriminatory framework. There are three fostering teams and one independent reviewing office which each have a specific function and role within the placement service. They work together to provide a range of placements using Brent resources and private and voluntary providers.

All referrals for placements are received by the placements Duty worker, from the Child's allocated social worker.

A. The Intake and Referral Team

The intake and referral team act as a central referral point for all children and young people's short-term & emergency placements and related services. A duty system is operated between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. It ensures a co-ordinated approach to planning, utilisation of Brent's foster carers in the best way possible and the provision of cost-effective high quality placements.

Structure

- 1 administrative assistant
- 5 social workers
- 2 social work assistants
- 2 placement officers
- 2 senior social workers
- 1 team manager
- 1 Reviewing Officer

Functions

The functions undertaken by the intake and referral team are outlined below:

I. Reviewing Foster Carers

The Reviewing Officer is responsible for Chairing annual Foster care reviews and reviews that are required following an allegation or complaint about a carer. They report on the themes and issues that emerge with regard to the standard of the services offered to looked after children and services offered to Foster carers. This process of reporting is enhanced by being a member of the management team. To ensure as much independence as possible the Reviewing Officer has no management role or responsibilities within the fostering teams.

II. Finding Placements and setting up contracts

The team finds appropriate short-term and emergency placements for “Looked After” children of Brent or children in need and their families. These placements are identified from Brent foster carers, independent foster carers, or private and voluntary agencies. They may include: residential accommodation, secure provision, foster placements, mother and baby units and family assessment units.

The service maintains and provides information on the availability of in house foster placements and approved and accredited external resources. Statutory and regulatory checks are obtained for placements, initial placement costs and additional costs are negotiated. The team ensures that the completed Placement Agreement accurately reflects the agreed package. The team establishes and monitors Pan London contracts with external providers to ensure they are maintained properly.

Brent plays a very active role with Pan London agenda to ensure advantage is taken of the knowledge and information that it maintains of external resources. Fees and fee increase requests are negotiated with external providers.

The contracts officer visits external placements that are not accredited by Pan London and follows the Pan London format for evaluating and monitoring them.

The team maintains a list of accredited resources and seeks to maintain relationships with those resources in order to ensure they are able to meet the changing requirements and needs of the ‘looked after’ population. The intake and referral team has up to date knowledge of acceptance criteria, referral system and care practices of placements for children.

III. Co-ordinating Brent Children’s Placement Panel

The intake and referral team take responsibility for convening and servicing the Brent placements panel. The purpose of the Placements Panel is to ensure that children who may require a high level of input receive services which meet their needs in a cost-effective way and maximises the use of appropriate provision across the full range of services available to children and that in-house and local resources are used wherever possible.

The panel authorises funding for:

1. All placements for children and families. This includes both children who are newly looked after, as well as those who are changing placement.
2. Community- based prevention and support packages with a duration of more than one month and where the weekly cost is in excess of £100.
3. To authorise requests for court related assessments conducted by CAMHS under the Service Level Agreement.

The panel contributes to monitoring the placements budget by projecting spend, ensuring that placements do not drift and that they meet the needs of children.

IV. To Supervise and Support Short Term Foster carers

The team provides a professional management, supervision and supporting service to short term foster carers and their families. This is to enable them to provide high quality, safe and effective care to children / young people looked after by Brent. To ensure that all Foster Carers are working within the Guidelines set down by the Department and that the service they provide is compliant with the Fostering National Standards.

All foster carers have a supervising social worker who offers them support and guidance in the following ways:

- Through home visits at least once every 6 weeks and phone calls at regular intervals. The purpose of these is agreed and the actual contact recorded. Any actions agreed during visits have clear timescales for completion and are recorded clearly. Home visits include an element of inspection of the home environment and standard of care offered to the child.
- Facilitating the carer's development by monitoring their training and support needs and setting agreed learning objectives on a yearly basis. Providing opportunities to foster carers to gain the necessary skills, knowledge information and advice, to meet the needs of children in their care. Ensuring that all foster carers receive up to date policies and procedures to include in the foster carers handbook and ensuring that Foster Carers are aware and compliant with the Policy and Guidelines as set out in the Foster Carers Handbook. The supervising social worker ensures that the Foster Carer review takes place annually giving the opportunity to formally appraise the Carer and plan for the forthcoming year.
- Providing opportunities to foster carers to gain the necessary skills, knowledge information and advice, to meet the needs of children in their care.
- Ensuring that all foster carers receive up to date policies and procedures to include in the foster carers handbook and ensuring that Foster Carers are aware and compliant with the Policy and Guidelines as set out in the Foster Carers Handbook. The supervising social worker ensures that the Foster Carer review takes place annually giving the opportunity to formally appraise the Carer and plan for the forthcoming year.
- Ensuring that all information held on carers is up to date including all statutory checks, composition of the household and foster carer

reviews. Maintaining the Foster Carers file which should include records of supervisory meetings. Information about children in placement must be stored on the child's file. Progressing financial and insurance requests and payments on behalf of Carers. Making sure that occupancy levels are maintained to the optimum level.

- By monitoring the development of the child in placement and keeping up to date with the progress of the child's Care Plan. Ensuring that the placement continues to meet the child's needs and that any difficulty that the Foster Carer has in meeting the child's needs is addressed. Attending the child's statutory review and planning meetings. Communicating regularly with the child's Social Worker and undertaking joint visits to the placement and exchanging recordings of home visits to support good communication. The supervising social worker will ensure that any concerns about the care of children are addressed and procedures followed when allegations and complaints arise.
- Ensuring the child's file is up to date.
- Monitoring the development of the child in placement and keeping up to date with the progress of the child's Care Plan.

B. The Fostering Assessment Team

This team is responsible for recruiting foster carers through ongoing publicity and marketing campaigns. Foster carers and extended family members (kinship carers) are assessed and prepared to care for looked after children in Brent. The team operates a duty system weekday 9 to 5pm to ensure a contactable person is available to take enquiries from the public and to respond to referrals for kinship care assessments from the child's Social Worker. The team operates an out of hours service supporting Brent Foster carers jointly with the other 2 fostering teams Mon-Fri 5 – 11pm, Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays 11am-11pm.

Structure

- 2 administrative assistants
- 5 social workers
- 1 kinship social worker
- 2 senior social workers
- 1 handyman
- 1 team manager

Family Links scheme

- 1 senior social worker
- 1 social worker

Intensive Fostering Scheme

- 1 senior social worker
- 1 social worker

Functions

The functions undertaken by the Fostering and Assessment team are outlined below:

I. **Publicity and marketing campaigns** to recruit the maximum number of foster carers to meet the diverse needs of children and young people from Brent. This includes short and long term carers, intensive foster carers and family links carers. The team plans, implements and evaluates various campaigns inside and outside the borough. This work involves consulting existing foster carers, national and local research, liaison with the local community, advertising in local and specialist papers, distributing leaflets in public places such as libraries, health centres, and Brent town hall as well as having stalls at different public events.

II. Referral Point for Prospective Carers

The team acts as a central referral and information point for prospective carers. Prospective carers are welcomed and responded to quickly and politely. They are treated with respect and without discrimination. The process, expectations, and criterion of becoming a potential carer are explained. The key criterion being that carers can offer a safe, stable and loving home and demonstrate an understanding of a child's needs. We inform potential carers that we prioritise applicants who are able to meet the specific needs of children from Brent and we explain what these are. An information brochure is sent out to all enquiring accompanied by a standard letter. A formal referral is taken by the fostering assessment team if the carers wish to proceed.

III. Preparation and Assessment of Carers

Information sessions for foster carers are held in the evening on a monthly basis and all prospective carers are expected to attend. Attendees receive a pack with handouts from the presentation and other relevant literature and promotional materials. Home study visits are undertaken within 4 weeks of an information session in order to do an initial assessment of the participant's suitability to become a carer.

If they are successful, they attend a preparation course. These are held on a three monthly basis and involve three full days training. The aim is to ensure that prospective carers are fully aware of the expectations and responsibilities of foster carers and that they are equipped with the appropriate skills to provide high quality care to children.

The sessions incorporate issues of diversity and anti-discrimination into every topic. Specific areas covered include : definitions of fostering , the assessment process , the reasons children become looked after, legislation , contact with birth families , attachment separation and loss , child development , child protection , roles of people involved, working in partnership , relevant meetings , diversity, identity and equality , challenging behaviour , safe caring , allegations , ongoing training and listening to the experiences of an approved foster carer.

The team complete individual competency based assessments of prospective carers using the British agency for Adoption and Fostering's (BAAF) "Form F assessment". Social workers have a target of completing an assessment within 6 months of the carer's initial inquiry. Three referees are visited. Health & safety checks are undertaken in line with the Health & Safety checklist and are carried out on all carers by staff experienced and proficient in this area of work. A pet questionnaire is completed to ensure that the animals do not pose a risk to children. Carers are asked to complete a portfolio which will include documents such as a safe caring profile, nominated carers assessment, evidence of competencies including worksheets of children in the family and feedback they received from the preparation group.

The Kinship assessments are in accordance with the regulations 28 and 38 of the Fostering regulations. The assessments for the short term foster carers, intensive foster carers and short term kinship placements are presented to the Brent Fostering panel for approval. This panel is administered by the fostering service, is chaired by an independent person and is multi-disciplinary. The fostering panel makes recommendations to the Assistant Director of children's services. Assessments for long term kinship placements and long term foster placements are approved by the adoption and permanency panel – which has a similar make up.

IV. Provision of an Intensive Foster care scheme

This is a new scheme for children aged 10 to 15 years old with complex emotional and behavioural needs. Carers with relevant qualifications or significant experience and competence of working with young people of this age group are being recruited. They will be paid a foster carer salary and allowance. The prospective carers will undergo the same assessment and preparation process outlined above. In addition they will be offered specialist training throughout the year and be expected to work very closely with the birth family and other professionals. All intensive foster carers will have a supervising social worker to monitor the progress of the placement and to offer them advice support and guidance in the same way as short term foster carers. It is envisaged that a number of children/young people currently living in residential units can be placed with these more local, specially trained and well supported paid carers. This will enable them to live nearer to their home

communities with a view to stabilising behaviour, and supporting young people to move on successfully from being looked after

V. Provision of Family Link Service

This is a new scheme finding respite carers for children with disabilities. Carers who can offer short breaks overnight in their own home are being recruited. The preparation, training and assessment process is outlined above. In addition family link carers have the opportunity to spend sometime at a special needs nursery or one of the residential respite units in Brent. Carers are encouraged to attend ongoing training courses related to Children with disabilities.

All family link carers will have a supervising social worker to monitor progress and offer advice, support and guidance. The placements will be made through a matching process that takes account of the needs of the child and the skills of each carer. All placements start with a series of introductions and the carers work closely with the birth family of the child.

C. The Long Term Fostering Team

This team is responsible for finding permanent family placements for children between the ages of 8 to 16, supporting long term foster carers and long term kinship carers. On occasions this age range lowers in order to meet the needs of children with disabilities and sibling groups. The team works collaboratively with other social work teams in the department and professionals involved in a child's life. The team operates a permanency duty system (which is jointly managed with the Adoption Team) Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

Structure

- 1 administrative assistant
- 5 social workers
- 1 kinship social worker
- 1 senior social worker
- 1 team manager.

Functions

The functions of the long term fostering team are outlined below:

I. Family Finding

The team identifies and progresses plans for permanent families for children aged 8-16. Permanent placements are effected through the permanency planning process. This involves participating in and progressing outcomes of permanency planning meetings for a child that considers the following:

- The most appropriate care plan for the child and whether a permanent placement is required

- Whether rehabilitation to the birth family has been ruled out
- Whether all the options within the extended family have been properly considered and explored
- Whether it is appropriate to refer the family for a Family Group Conference
- The most appropriate type of permanent placement, including family & friend as carers (via foster care / residence orders / special guardianship order / adoption), long term foster care and adoption
- Whether more than one type of placement needs to be sought at the same time (twin-track planning) and how this should be managed between the teams
- Any Court proceedings that are ongoing and any orders that may be required.
- Whether placements social workers will be required to complete assessments and / or court reports and present these at court and / or panel – as well as family find separately for looked after children

When a decision has been made that a long term foster carer is the best option for a child the team will be involved trying to identify a carer who can best meet their needs. A matching report is completed jointly by the Placements family finding social worker and the child's allocated social worker (this may also include representation from an IFA if appropriate). The child's Form E is presented alongside the prospective carers Form F and the matching report to the adoption and permanency panel for approval to be recommended.

II Long Term Fostering Assessments

The team update fostering assessments on Brent Short term foster carers who wish to be reassessed as long term foster carers for looked after children. Some Short term carers also may wish to be reassessed with regards to applying for a Residence Order for a looked after child placed in their care. Brent placements will consider all such applications favourably and alongside any other family finding that is taking place which may best secure permanency for a looked after child. The Long Term fostering Team will work in line with the BAAF Form F competency based assessment framework to undertake any such assessments. (see assessment process Short term fostering.)

III Residence Order Assessments / Residence Order Allowances

The team completes Residence Order assessments for children and for children looked after, this includes a financial assessment of the carers/child's needs for child. A Residence Order settles the arrangements for whom a child is to live with and if the child has been looked after by the local authority under a Care Order, this ends. The holder of the order acquires Parental Responsibility which is shared with the birth parent. A social worker will complete the assessment within an agreed time scale. The team aims to complete these assessments within 4 months from the point of allocation.

Residence Order assessments are effectively court reports and it is the court that will decide on the suitability of the match between carer and child - largely based on these reports. Brent procedures ensure that there is case accountability with regards to any case that is in court as a result of Brent initiating proceedings. Where Brent Children's Services is supporting the granting of a Residence Order – this is ratified at a LAC review, discussed at an Initial Permanency Planning meeting (IPPM), a Form E on the child is presented to the Adoption and Permanency panel for a Best Interest Residence Order, and then once the assessment has been completed the case is brought back to panel for consideration to be given as to the granting of a residence order Allowance. E.g. presentation of Form E, Form F 2 and a financial assessment report supporting the granting of a Residence Order allowance.

The Long Term Fostering team process referrals on Residence Order Allowances either as part of or separate to Residence Order Assessments (in both public and private proceedings). In private proceedings Residence Order allowances do not need to be considered by the Brent Adoption and Permanency panel. Residence order allowances are means tested benefits and if granted need to be reviewed on an annual basis

IV To Monitor Supervise and Support Long Term Carers

The team provides a professional management, supervision and supporting service to long term foster carers, family and friends (kinship) carers and their families. This is to enable them to provide high quality, safe and effective care to children / young people looked after by Brent. We ensure that all Foster Carers are working within the Guidelines set down by the Department and that the service they provide is compliant with the National Fostering Standards.

In the same way that short term foster carers are supported, all long term carers are allocated a supervising social worker - who monitors their work, and offers them support, advice and guidance. Carers are encouraged to attend the NVQ training course on childcare and ongoing courses offered by the department.

The team holds specific training and support courses for carers who are family and friends of the child. These are held up to four times a year, incorporating diversity issues into all the topics which include; definitions and expectations of being a carer, legal duties and the requirements of the department/departamental expectations, Assessment Review and Approval process, role of the supervising social worker, role of the child's social worker, role of the foster carer, information about allowances, divided loyalties issues, contact issues and support needs.

V Private Fostering Campaign and Assessment of Private foster carers

The Long Term Fostering team will take a lead role in ensuring that Brent is able to fulfil its duties with regards to Private Fostering arrangements.

It is the responsibility of the Long Term Fostering Team to run a Private Fostering advertising campaign to raise awareness amongst Brent employees, service users and the wider community with regards to the our collective responsibilities in this area; as well as to complete Private Fostering assessments for Brent service users referred to the team. In preparation for the campaign the Long Term Fostering team has undertaken a consultation process with other London and UK based Local Authorities - with regards to best practice in this area, as well as identifying common themes re policy and procedures in this area. Prior to the campaign taking place there will be an awareness raising process within Brent Children's Services and the wider organisation at Brent with regards to Brent's duties in Private Fostering arrangements.

Private fostering assessments will be completed by social workers in the Long Term Fostering team and the areas to be covered in these assessments are outlined in the procedures.

Supervision of private fostering arrangements are to be undertaken by relevant social work staff in the Children's Social work teams in line with the procedures and referrals will be transferred to these teams as appropriate on a geographical basis.

Numbers of Foster Carers

144

Numbers of Children Placed

156

Numbers of Complaints and Their Outcomes

5 Complaints

2	Not Upheld
0	Upheld
3	Pending

The complaints not upheld were about process and communication. The 3 pending complaints are about communication, process and foster care allowances.

Complaints

All local authorities are required to have Complaints Procedures under the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and the Local Authority Social Services (Complaints Procedure) Order 1990 and also, where children are involved, under the Children Act 1989. The Complaints Procedure is listed in Part III.

All complaints and queries will be dealt with in a manner that meets Departmental and National requirements. Children, their birth family and adopters will all be given a copy of Brent Council's complaint leaflet.

Children will be made aware of the complaints procedure, children's rights services and of their right to make representations and complaints. Birth families and carers will be advised of the complaints procedure and their right to make representations and complaints.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection, 4th floor , Aspect Gate, 166 College Road , Harrow , Middlesex HA1 1BH.
Direct Line – 020 8420 – 0100.

Jan Fishwick
Registered manager
Date: January 2005

FAMILY SUPPORT DIVISION

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Janet Palmer

PA to Assistant Director
Christine Ricketts

HEAD OF
YOUTH
OFFENDING
SERVICE
Peter Sutlieff

LAC OUTCOMES
MANAGER
Anne Edwards

SERVICE UNIT
MANAGER
East Office
Chris Bridgett

SERVICE UNIT
MANAGER
West Office
Sharon Stockman

SERVICE UNIT
MANAGER
Placement
Jan Fishwick

ACTING SERVICE
UNIT MANAGER
Integrated Services
George Riley

SERVICE UNIT
MANAGER
Systems & Support
Anna Janes

Prevention
Team

Intervention
Team

ISSP Team

Administration/
Finance Team

LAC Education
Team

Independent
Reviewing
Officers

Referral and
Assessment
Teams x 2

Children in Need
Teams
X3

CP Manager,
Planning &
Review

Sure Start
Roundwood
Director

Referral and
Assessment
Teams x 2

Children in Need
Teams
X3

Principal Officer
Leaving Care Team

Unaccompanied
Minors & Housing
Team

Leaving Care Team

P&V Residential
Care + Foster Care

Recruitment and
Assessment Team

Intake & Referral
Team

Long Term Fostering
Team

Adoption Team

Post Adoption Team

Family Support
Team

Children w.
Disabilities Team

Clement Close

Crawford Avenue

Care at Home

Freeman Family
Centre

Children's Fund
Programme Manager

SYSTEMS &
INFORMATION
TEAM

SERVICE UNIT
ADMINISTRATOR
Resources
Judy Martin

SERVICE UNIT
ADMINISTRATOR
Placements
Bunmi Osaghae

SERVICE UNIT
ADMINISTRATOR
East & West
Robert Smith

SENIOR
ADMINISTRATOR
Leaving Care/UMHT
Carole Wilkins

