



**London Borough of Bromley
Education, Care & Health Services
Children's Social Care**



Bromley Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2013/14 (July 2013 – updated to reflect new regulations)



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The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards, 2011, Section 16, state 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. Values, Aims And Objectives Of Bromley's Fostering Service

Mission Statement

We believe that in most circumstances children are best cared for in their own families. 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, where possible, 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.

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 looked after children, 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 for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible, 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.
- However, no-one has a right to be a foster carer - fostering decisions must focus on the interests of the child.
- Foster carers have a right to full information about their foster 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.

Aims

- 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.
- To provide a comprehensive Fostering Service to meet the needs of children, birth families and social work staff by recruiting sufficient numbers of in-house foster carers to meet the needs of the local community.
- To ensure that the needs, wishes and safety of the looked after child are at the centre of the fostering process and that the views of looked after children, their parents and carers are actively sought and listened to.
- 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.
- In making plans for the fostering placement for a Looked After Child, 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.
- 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.
- 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, where appropriate, and that there is minimum disruption to continuity of education and established social contacts and activities.
- To recruit suitably qualified and experienced people to deliver the Fostering Service who will provide services to ensure compliance with all required safety checks.
- 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.
- To assess and, where appropriate, approve prospective Foster-Carers within stipulated timescales.
- To provide a rigorous training and support programme in order that our carers can enhance their skills.

Objectives

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
- Amendments to Care Planning Regulations and Guidance July 2013
- Departmental Policies and Procedures, including the Placement Policy

2. Organisation and Facilities of the Fostering Service

(see Appendix 1 for detailed structure)

- Bromley's Fostering Service is part of its Education Care and Health Services, managed by Executive Director, Terry Parkin, and is the direct responsibility of the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, Kay Weiss.
- Kay Weiss is supported by five Heads of Service (Youth Support, Referral & Assessment, Safeguarding & Care Planning, Quality Assurance – including the Safeguarding Board – and Care & Resources) and the Fostering Service comes under the remit of the Head of Care & Resources, Ian Leadbetter.
- The responsible person for the Fostering Service within Care & Resources is the Group Manager for Family Placement, Susan Noonan, supported by two Deputy Group Managers, Maggie Richardson and Sammy Forbes. They are responsible for ensuring delivery of the services detailed in the next section.
- The Fostering and Adoption teams jointly support a staff bank of qualified and experienced social workers in family placement work.
- The Fostering Service is based in Bromley's Civic Centre, in close proximity to other departments and teams to facilitate close partnership. Interview, meeting and training rooms are provided on the Civic Centre site.
- The Service is responsible for establishing, maintaining and servicing the Bromley Fostering Panel. The Panel, in carrying out its regulatory functions, makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Makers, Kay Weiss (Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care Division) and Ian Leadbetter (Head of Care and Resources).
- The Family Placement Team makes use of other Council Departments, such as Finance, HR, IT, Customer Services, as required, to support planning, delivery, and monitoring of services. This includes databases & information systems etc used by the Family Placements Team, which are under continuous improvement to reflect the needs of the developing Service.
- The Service also has access to the Authority's Medical Officer and the Senior Solicitor, whose responsibilities include advising the Adoption and Fostering Panels and offering advice and consultation to social work staff, other professionals and foster carers.

- The Fostering Service works in close partnership with:
 - the Children's Commissioning Team in identifying and meeting the placement needs of Bromley's Looked After Children.
 - other teams in Safeguarding and Social Care.
 - colleagues from other agencies and/or Departments such as Health, Education, CAMHS, Housing, Youth Justice etc
 - the Bromley Foster Care Association (BFCA) who represent the views of foster carers
 - the Living in Care Council (LinCC) which represents the views of Bromley's children and young people in care - the Children's Guide has been updated by the Living in Care Council (LinCC) and devised a template for foster carers to provide a Welcome leaflet for children coming to stay.

3. Services provided

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 **all** Bromley's children in care, including emergency, short-term and long-term placements, family and friends carers, children with disabilities and parent & child placements
- in particular, to develop services for family members and friends to act as foster carers for specific children, and positively encourage these placements
- recruit, approve and support foster carers as far as possible carers who reflect the racial and cultural origins of Bromley Looked After children.
- recruit and approve foster carers in Bromley or nearby so that the Fostering Service provided to Looked After children is local and causes minimum disruption to aspects of their life such as education and training.
- comply with all Fostering and Care Planning Regulations and Guidance (including July 2013 amendments) and Standards
- contribute to a decrease in the overspend in the children's placement budgets by providing an effective, efficient and local in-house service.
- provide a service which is anti-discriminatory and which promotes equality and inclusion

Services

- Advice and information on fostering, including providing a Duty System for the Department when referrals are made, and requesting placements for children
- Initial home visits by a fostering social worker to assess the motivation and ability of prospective carers to provide a safe caring environment for a child
- A Preparation and Training course delivering the Skills-to-Foster programme
- Comprehensive preparation and assessment for prospective foster carers, including specialist workers to develop and support Family & Friends Carers

- All assessments of prospective foster carers to be presented to the Fostering Panel for a decision on the recommendation to be put forward to the Department's decision maker within stipulated timescales.
- Provision of a Supervising 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 information on services for foster carers to assist them in their care of children placed with them.
- Advice and information to other professionals working with children.
- Information sources including:
 - A new website (under construction)
 - Fostering Brochure for prospective applicants
 - Children's guides to the Fostering service
 - Information on Friends and Family care
 - Workbooks for foster carers undertaking the Skills to Foster and TDS Induction standards
 - Information for those attending the Fostering Panel
 - Fostering Handbook
 - Information for birth families.
- Attendance of fostering social workers with their foster carers at all Child Protection Conferences and LAC Reviews and Permanency Planning Meetings.
- Monthly Fostering Support Meetings, including a Black Carers Support Group. A new specialist Support Group for Family & Friends Carers is under development
- Training programmes for foster carers to achieve the TDS induction standards and thereafter to continually enhance and develop their skills , including opportunities for carers to undertake NVQ and other specialist training
- A quarterly newsletter.
- The Bromley Fostering Panel, which fulfils its statutory functions as required and offers advice and consultation to social work staff on fostering matters.
- Membership of the Fostering Network (including legal membership) and BAAF, and attendance at functions arranged by these agencies.
- Advocacy and Independent Visitor Services for foster-children.

4. Recruiting, Preparing, Assessing and Approving Prospective Foster Carers

Recruitment

- There is continuous recruitment for foster carers who can meet the needs of Bromley's looked after children. There is also targeted recruitment for specific age ranges and/or specific children needing foster placements. The Group Manager of Family Placements and Head of Service for Care and Resources plan and put into operation this strategy.
- The new website is under construction to attract more foster carers.
- Prospective applicants can dial a recruitment line; download information and an initial enquiry form from the web; email the Department, or attend an informal Information Session to progress their interest. These sessions are held so that prospective applicants can chat with experienced foster-carers and foster care staff about foster care and what Bromley offers.
- The Customer Service Centre manages all enquiries for information about fostering in Bromley and sends out information on request.
- The Fostering Team, via dedicated duty time, aims to respond to all enquiries within one day.

Assessment Stage 1

- If prospective applicants choose want to proceed from their enquiry, they are asked to make a formal application and receive an initial home visit by a fostering social worker. To speed up the process, references, Medical Reports, DBS checks and any other relevant information is concurrently sought by the Fostering Service.
- This stage is an initial mutual exploration of the tasks involved in fostering and the suitability of the applicants to perform them.
- From the information collated, the allocated social worker will complete an initial assessment and pass their written report to the Group Manager for Family Placement. 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 Training and Preparation Group.
- Candidates can withdraw at any point but If they are not considered suitable candidates at this stage, the information is passed to the Agency Decision Manager to make a final decision. If they confirm that the applicants are not suitable, a letter informing them so must reach them within ten days of the final information to complete Stage 1 being received. The applicants can access Bromley's Complaints Process if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

Assessment Stage 2

- In many cases, where possible, this overlaps with Stage 1 in order to speed up the Assessment process.
- Preparation groups are run at least six times a year and are run on different days of the week, including weekends, to facilitate attendance.
- A mixture of fostering social workers, foster carers and young people from the care system present each Preparation Group. Comprehensive information is given to participants to ensure that they learn about all aspects of fostering.

- Staff and prospective foster carers complete evaluation forms and these are considered by the fostering workers and the Group Manager. The interaction of the carer during the preparation training is also considered.
- A comprehensive fostering assessment is undertaken using BAAF Form 'F'. All members of the household are seen individually as well as in a family group.
- Three personal references are sought, of which one 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.
- The Form 'F' is shared with the applicant(s) so they can make corrections and observations on the report prior to it being submitted to Panel.
- The assessing social worker receives regular supervision throughout the assessment.
- If at any time during Stage Two, there are concerns about the suitability of participants, then a brief report will be presented to the 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 within 28 days if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

Approval

- The assessing social worker prepares the applicant(s) for attending the Bromley Fostering Panel.
- The Form F, together with any written observations or representations, is submitted by the assessing social worker to the Panel.
- The Panel's recommendations are then passed to the Agency Decision Maker who will make the decision within seven working days of the Panel.
- The decision is sent to the applicant(s) within 7 working days of it being made.
- If the Agency Decision is not to approve, the applicants are notified in writing, including the information that they have 28 days to make representations to the Panel or use the Independent Review Mechanism.

Timescales

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

5. Support for Foster Carers

- Following approval, all foster carers will have an allocated Supervising Social Worker (SSW) who supports and supervises them.
- The SSW supports the foster carer by providing information about policy and procedures, relevant legislation and resources within and outside the Department.
- 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.
- A range of fostering support services are made available to foster carers:
 - The SSW and the child's social worker will support the carer in every aspect of their task, 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.
- There is a quarterly newsletter - and it is envisaged that the new website will provide approved carers a secure section for peer support.
- Access to the services of Medical and Legal Advisers is provided 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. Additional payments are available for specific purposes and help may also be given for any specialist equipment required.
- Specialist therapeutic support to children and their foster carers through a specialist Looked After Children's CAMHS service.
- Specialist Education and Health teams.
- 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
- The Bromley Foster Care Association meets bi-monthly and is financially supported by the Department. The Department meets regularly with members of the Committee of the Association to ensure an effective working relationship is maintained.
- All Foster Carers have membership of the Fostering Network, including legal membership.

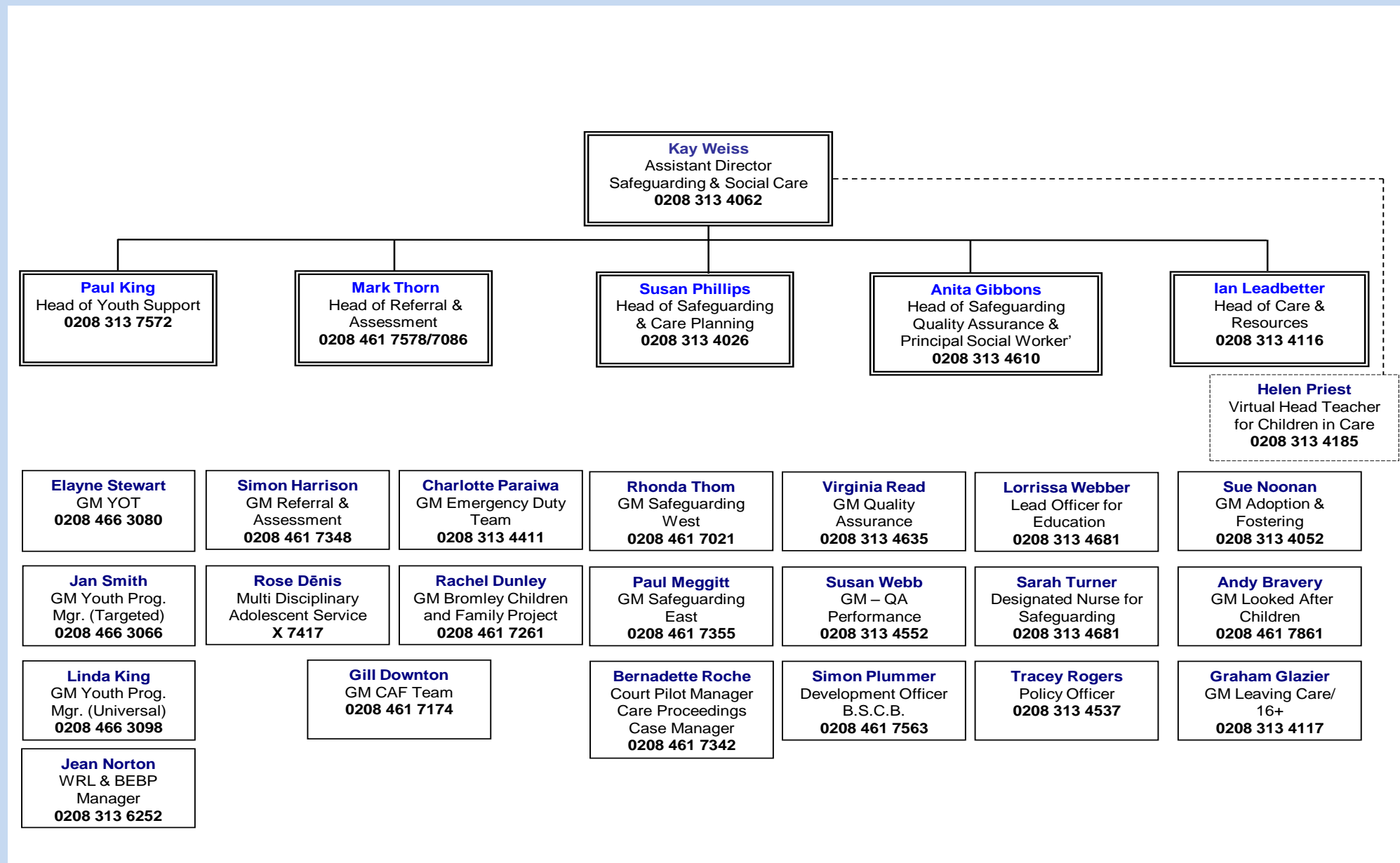
6. Complaints Procedure

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' in case an occasion arrives when they feel they have been treated unfairly. However, we will always endeavour to reach a reconciliation with complainants before it becomes necessary to make a complaint.
- As described previously in the *Assessment Stage 2* and *Approval* sections, applicants who have completed Stage One of the Assessment but are subsequently not considered suitable as foster carers may also make representations to Panel or access the Independent Review Mechanism.

APPENDIX 1 – STAFFING AND STRUCTURE page 1



APPENDIX 1 – STAFFING AND STRUCTURE page 2 Correct as of 01.08.13

Position or Role in the Agency	Hours per week	Name	Year of appointment to Fostering Service	Qualifications
Group Manager	36	Susan Noonan	2013	Dip SW, CQSE, PQ1, CMS, DMS
Panel Chair	As required	Dr Helen Cosis-Brown		PHD Social Care. Dip Sw
Deputy Group Manager	36	Sammy Forbes (temp post holder)	2013	CQSW
Deputy Group Manager	36	Margaret Richardson	2011	DipSW, PQ1, Practice teaching award, DipHE social work. D31 & D32 (Child Care) PTLs
SGO Officer	36	Deborah Brown	2009	BA Family & Child Care Studies/Diploma in Social Work
Senior Practitioner	36	Wenifred Marshall	2004	DipSW, DipHE applied social studies, PQSW,
Senior Practitioner	36	Louise Matovu	2009	CQSW, BA(Hons) Applied SW, PQ Consolidation
Senior Practitioner (Acting)	36	Claudia Verwey	2010	BA social work Pq consolidation
Senior Practitioner	36	Angela Harrison	2004	BA (hons) Social Work, DipSW, PQ1
Senior Practitioner	14	Catherine Tulett	2003	MA in SW; PQ1
Senior Practitioner	36	Steve Thring	2003	DipSW; Dip Child Protection; PQ1 Dip HE (social services)
Senior Practitioner	28	Rena Gray	2006	NNEB, CSS 1985 Child Protection and Child Care studies, PQ1-PQ6 2002
Senior Practitioner	36	Sheila Delliston	2008	BA(Hons) Social science, CQSW, MA in Child Protection.
Supervising Social Worker	21	Susanna Reich	2010	BSc (Hons), MA/Dip SW, PQ Consolidation Module
Supervising Social Worker	36	Emily Dodds	2010	BSc(Hons) Applied Social Sciences, DipSW, PQ Consolidation
Supervising Social Worker	36	Rosa Sams	2013	BSc Social Work. PQ Consolidation Model
Supervising Social Worker	36	Godwin Munzara	2013	BA Honours Business. BA Honours Social Work NVQ3 Child Care
Supervising Social Worker	36	Cheryl Medcalf	2013	BA Social Care, BA Social Work, consolidation model
Panel Administrator	36	Bernadette Wilby	2012	Temp Post holder
Team Administrator	36	Cherry Morel Lynda Morton	2013	Temp post holders
Business Process Officer	36	Jody Malley	2012	BSc, PG Dip Environmental Sciences

Manager of the Fostering Service

Susan Noonan,

Family Placement Team,

St Blaise Building,

Civic Centre,

Bromley, BR1 3UH

Telephone: 020 8313 4052

Fax: 020 8313 4400

Email: Susan.Noonan@bromley.gov.uk

Relevant Qualifications: Dip SW, CQSE, PQ1, CMS, DMS

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.

APPENDIX 2 – QUALITY ASSURANCE

Tracking systems are in place to monitor timescales from initial enquiry to approval.

All Staff are supervised in accordance with the Divisional Supervision Policy and Management Standards. The Group Manager [Family Placements] is supervised on a regular, three-weekly basis by the Head of Service, Care and Resources and the Group Manager is currently responsible for ensuring the supervision of all social work staff in the Fostering Team on the same three-weekly basis, and other staff on a four-weekly basis.

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

The Group Manager is responsible for ensuring files are always seen, read and agreed for closure by a manager. In addition, files are read and signed on an occasional basis to assure quality. An audit form has been produced for this purpose

The Deputy Group Manager [Fostering] is delegated to be the Professional Adviser to the Fostering Panel and reads and signs all Forms 'F', the child permanency records and matching reports on foster carers and children.

The Chair of the Fostering Panel also quality assures the work of Panel, including the reports presented

A Panel feedback form is in use for applicants and foster carers attending Panel to collate comments on their experience of attending Panel

All foster carers are supervised and supported by an allocated Supervising Social Worker, and receive an unannounced visit.

Their approval is reviewed annually in partnership with them, the, child(ren)'s Social Worker, and Independent Reviewing Officer - if possible the foster child and birth parents contribute to this. The first annual review is presented to the Fostering Panel and subsequent reviews are presented to the Agency Decision Maker. Reviews are carried out sooner if there are concerns or issues the Fostering Panel should be made aware of.

An annual report with a six monthly update on fostering activity is produced and submitted to both the Care Services Portfolio Holder and the Fostering Panel.

In line with requirements, the Fostering Service will be inspected by Ofsted under the Care Standards Act 2000. OFSTED can also be contacted by carers who feel there are issues of concern which warrant their involvement. For details, see: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/concerns-and-complaints-about-social-care-providers.

Feedback from carers, children and birth parents is a crucial element of ensuring the service is effective and responsive, and consultation takes a number of formats: individually through the case planning process and to allocated social workers; feedback from training and support groups; via formal consultation exercises, and foster carers and children and young people's input into various working groups, questionnaires and consultation exercises.