Introduction

The following Statement of Purpose is divided into two parts. Part one sets out the broad aims and objectives of the service; the management structures; what services are provided; how policies, procedures and guidance are developed and agreed; the principles and standards of care that are expected; and the procedures for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing foster carers. Part two and the appendices illustrate in more detail information relating to the work of the fostering team including the number of staff and their qualifications, the number of foster carers and children placed, and the number of complaints and their outcomes.

1. Aims and Objectives

1.1 The Aims and Objectives of the fostering team fit with a number of local and national aims and objectives along with their supporting documentation.

These are:

• Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011 (Care Standards Act 2000)
• Fostering Services Regulations 2011
• Family Services Service Improvement Plan 2013-14
• Fostering Team Business Plan 2013-14
• Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and statutory guidance

The Fostering Team actively contributes towards improving its own performance against national standards and assisting the department in achieving the highest possible performance indicators.

1.2 Aims: There are eight specific aims for the fostering service to achieve.
Aim 1
Recruit foster carers who can offer a range of placements providing for the assessed needs of looked-after children and young people in the Tri-Borough service.

Objectives:
• To run foster carer recruitment campaigns approving carers from a range of backgrounds to meet the diverse needs of looked after children in the boroughs.
• To offer a timely and courteous response to prospective foster carers enquiries, assessing suitable candidates.
• To offer prospective carers a preparation group based on the Skills to foster model.
• To complete BAAF Form F assessments in a comprehensive and timely manner.
• To complete assessments within five months, but no more than eight months at a maximum.
• To involve approved foster carers in all stages of the recruitment process rewarding them suitably for any work they undertake.

Aim 2
Support foster carers in the work they do with young people, providing appropriate care and ensuring that young people’s emotional, physical, health and education needs are met.

Objectives:
• To provide an annual training programme for foster carers.
• To provide monthly support groups for foster carers by offering a range of times and locations to suit different foster carer’s needs.
• To pay a fee to foster carers for the tasks they undertake and to provide appropriate financial allowances enabling foster carers to care for children without assuming financial themselves.
• To provide suitable and coordinated support services to foster carers in addition to visits from their supervising social worker and the child’s social worker.

Aim 3
Treat all those involved with the fostering task with respect, promote equality and pay due consideration to individual needs. To promote equality and reduce discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, religion, culture, language, gender, disability and sexual orientation.

Objectives:
• To recruit foster carers who reflect the background and needs of children requiring placement through targeted recruitment activity.
• To offer training to foster carers and staff that will improve skills, knowledge, awareness and good working methods promoting anti-discriminatory practice.
• To arrange for interpreters and translation of material when this is necessary and reasonable.

Aim 4
Supervise foster carers to ensure they offer appropriate and safe foster care for looked after children.

Objectives:
• To visit foster carers as required, but at least once every six weeks when children are in placement and to maintain at no less than monthly contact with them at such times.
• To complete supervision pro forma for each visit which, details outcomes and actions from the meeting an agreed copy of which is provided for the foster carer.
• To complete all annual foster carer reviews on time.
• To undertake annual inspections of foster homes, including a health and safety check and to undertake at least one unannounced visit per year with foster carers.
• To develop with foster carers a ‘Safer Caring Agreement’ within each foster home and foster placement.
• To ensure appropriate checks and references are undertaken on all new foster carers and to repeat these checks and references at required and appropriate times.
Aim 5
Consult with service users, providers, professionals and other agencies to highlight service development needs and to implement these where possible and appropriate.

Objectives:
• To have a regular consultations meeting with foster carers and other parts of the service, including more senior managers and other agencies to gather the views of carers.
• To record the meetings and implement agreed actions within set timescales incorporating suggestions into service plans when necessary.
• To use annual reviews with foster carers to gather information from foster carers, looked after children, their parent(s) and others with whom the fostering service works in partnership to improve the training, support and supervision of Foster carers and to highlight ways in which the service can be developed.
• To consult with and encourage the participation of looked after children in service development through a variety of means including the Corporate Parenting Panel, developing a Children in Care Council, and foster carer annual review consultation forms.

Aim 6
Retain foster carers and develop a competent, experienced and appropriate trained and qualified placements resource.

Objectives:
• To provide opportunities for carers to achieve qualifications and credit framework diploma.
• To offer a comprehensive training programme that links to national standards and enable foster carers to complete the training development standards for foster carers.
• To provide accurate and up-to-date information to foster carers about a child or young person’s history and current needs ensuring that foster carers are provided with all relevant family information.
• To develop supports and services that takes account of the foster carer and their family’s needs.
• To organise social events for and with foster carers to show appreciation for the commitment they make in caring for children and young people.

Aim 7
Work in partnership with foster carers, children and young people and their families and with other professionals and agencies.

Objectives:
• To provide an effective and efficient placement service so that requests for placement can be made easily, are assessed and processed effectively and efficiently, with children being provided with the most appropriate placement for their needs.
• To provide full and appropriate information to foster carers regarding placements, and the planning for children including written care plans and LAC materials.
• To deal with all complaints and allegations in a way that fits with the council’s legislative requirements.
• To give full weight and credibility to foster carers views when determining plans and outcomes for children.

Aim 8
Ensure that the fostering team is run in an effective and efficient way with qualified staff so that children are suitably safeguarded and benefit from their time in foster care.

Objectives:
• Recruit staff with the appropriate qualifications, skills knowledge and experience for their posts, ensuring that all appropriate checks and references are undertaken.
• To offer staff appropriate training, supervision and development opportunities so that they are able to carry out their duties in an appropriate way.
• To provide a service that meets legislative requirements as well as local and national policy and procedural guidelines, while seeking to improve its service delivery.
2. Management Structure

2.1.1 The Fostering and Adoption Service (Tri Borough) is part of the Family Services section of the Families and Children’s Service Business Group.

Organisation and Management of the Operation of the Fostering Service

3.1 From the 1st April 2012 The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council’s fostering services have been working together to find suitable placement for the looked after children in all three local Authorities.

3.2 The head of service’s name and address is:

Sally Pillay  
4th Floor  
Town Hall Extension  
Hammersmith Town Hall  
King Street  
W6 9JU

Telephone 0208 753 2320  
Sally.Pillay@RBKC.gov.uk

Team Structure for Duty Supervision and Support team

Suresh Kumar-Team Manager (Duty Supervision and Support team)  
Sania Khan – Principal Social Worker  
Savio Mathews- Acting Principal Social Worker  
16 full time and 1 part time supervising social workers  
1 Business support officer  
2 Fostering Duty officers  
1 - Senior Business support officer

Team Structure for Recruitment and Assessment team

Paul Anderson Team Manager (Recruitment and Assessment team)  
Abiola Kehinde - Principal Social Worker  
Maggie Davies - Principal Social Worker  
Steward Darla - Principal Social Worker  
9 full time and 1 part time Recruitment and Assessment social workers  
1 Recruitment officer  
1 Senior Business support officer  
A separate connected person’s team  
A Separate Permanence and support team
3. Services Provided for Children and Foster Carers.

The Fostering and Adoption Service provides a range of services. These include a duty and placement service, the recruitment and assessment of foster carers, as well as support and supervision. Recruitment and assessment of foster carers and their support and supervision is provided by social workers specialising in these areas of service provision.

3.1 Duty Service including Placement of Children.
The fostering service operates a duty service overseen by a suitably qualified duty manager.

The duty and placements service is responsible for the following:

a. Receiving requests for foster placement for children and young persons aged 0-17 years.

b. Arrangement of fostering placements (non permanent).

With:

• In-house foster carers
• Neighbouring local authorities

With assistance and input from the Recruitment Officer, tasks include:

1. Design of advertising and recruitment materials
2. Liaison with specialist advisers and agencies on recruitment matters
3. Coordination of advertising and recruitment campaigns
4. Responses to enquiries including dissemination of information packs
5. Initial visits to prospective carers
6. Running pre-approval ‘Skills to Foster’ preparation courses
7. Assessment of prospective foster carers and presentation of reports to the fostering Panel.
8. Setting up newly approved carers with equipment required for fostering

3.2.2 The team may also undertake assessments for long term fostering of new enquirers. It is preferable if these applicants are also able to manage short term placements until a permanent placement can be made or where a current fee paid foster carer is to move to become a long term foster carer for a particular child placed with them.

3.3 Support and Supervision of Foster carers.
3.3.1 The fostering Service currently supports and supervises all respite, short-term intermediate and long term foster placements. Connected Persons who are foster carers will be supported and supervised within the Connected Persons team. For more details of support provided see section 13.4.
3.3.2 Supervisory visits take place when required, but with a minimum period between visits of six weeks when children are in placement. Contact with foster carers is maintained on at least every four to six weeks.

3.4 Training of Foster carers.
3.4.1 Prospective foster carers are initially prepared for fostering through attendance at ‘Skills to Foster’ courses and the assessment process.
3.4.2 Following approval an induction and other training courses are offered on a regular basis. Training is provided around core areas as highlighted by the national minimum standards. Foster carer’s views regarding training are sought during supervisory visits, the annual review and in training programme reviews.
3.4.3 Newly approved foster carers are linked to a peer mentor for the first six months after approval for extra support.
3.4.4 An annual training programme is planned on the basis of assessed need within the carer group, national and local requirements, and to facilitate the attainment by foster carers of the qualifications and credit framework diploma.
3.4.5 Foster carers must, complete the Children’s Workforce Development Council’s training, support and development standards for foster care, and all new foster carers are expected to complete the required workbook within twelve months of approval.
3.5 Qualifications and Credit Framework diploma for Foster Carers.

3.5.1 Foster carers are offered the opportunity to uptake a diploma under qualifications and credit framework if they attend the required minimum training and support group meetings.

4. Procedure and Policy

4.1 The fostering service is responsible for developing guidance, policy and procedures relevant to the fostering service.

Supervision and support to foster carers:
All foster carers have been assigned supervising social worker who is responsible to provide regular supervision session every six weeks. During these visits discussion about progress of the child/children in placement including physical, emotional, educational and cultural needs. This meeting is also to provide the opportunity to discuss issues such as a foster carer’s skills and training needs, health and safety issues and communication with professionals.

5. Placements Provided.

5.1 The Fostering Team provides a number of placement types:
1) Short-term placements: These may be offered for any period from an overnight stay until a child moves to a permanent home after a number of years.
2) Respite placements: A number of carers are approved to take short-term respite placements only. These may be one-off placements or form part of a care package that enables children to remain with their usual carers for the long term.
3) Long-term foster placements: Where a child will remain with a foster carer until they are 18 years old or ready to move into independent living.
4) Interagency placements: Occasionally; when other local authorities are searching for a foster placement, a carer with a vacancy maybe matched with that child. That local authority retains responsibility for the child whilst fostering service (Tri Borough) retain the registration and support of the foster carer. An interagency agreement is signed and an additional fee is paid for the placement.
5) Connected Persons placements: A number of foster carers are approved specifically for a named child whom they are related to or who is a family friend.
6) Specialist fostering placements: A few carers provide placements to young people who have particularly challenging behaviour. This requires carers with experience and the ability to manage the challenges such placements bring. These carers are given additional support and fee to help manage the placements.

7) Parent and child placements: A few carers provide placements to parents and children.

Parents are sometimes over the age of 18 years old. Often these parents are assessed on their parenting skills while they are in the foster placement. The foster carer may need to assist in the assessment, keep good written records, and work in partnership with the social workers involved in the assessment. These carers are given additional support and training to manage these often complex placements.

6. Outcomes for Children and Young People.

The outcomes for children and young people that underlie the fostering services work to improve the lives of looked after children through:

• Helping children to be healthy
• Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe
• Helping children to achieve and enjoy what they do
• Helping children to make a positive contribution
• Achieving economic well-being

These outcomes and principles are also outlined in the pledge to Looked After Children (LAC) and the foster carer charter.

6.1 Helping children to be healthy.

6.1.1 Foster carers are given information about a child’s health and are clear what responsibility has been delegated to them in making health related decisions from the placement planning meeting. This includes information about the administration of medication.

6.1.2 Foster carers are provided with health awareness training. This includes training on first aid, health and safety, sex and relationships, drug and alcohol awareness and meeting the emotional needs of children.

6.1.3 Foster carers receive an annual health and safety check and supervising social workers continuously monitoring health and safety issues.

6.1.4 Foster carers promote an active and healthy lifestyle by providing healthy food and snack options and encourage children to engage in physical activities.
6.1.5 The fostering service will work in close partnership with the health team for LAC to ensure that there is partnership working to improve the health outcomes of children placed with foster carers. This includes regular meetings with the team and managers, putting together specialised training for carers including fostering changes and Health courses.

6.2 Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe.

6.2.1 Every foster placement will have a safer caring agreement which is agreed at the placement planning meeting.

6.2.2 Foster carers will report missing children and follow expectations as laid out in the ‘Missing Children Procedure’. If a child goes missing the foster carer actively tries to locate and encourage the child to come home or talk to their social worker.

6.2.3 Foster carers will be supported to help talk to children and monitor their use of the internet and mobile phones to ensure they are safeguarded against bullying and abuse.

6.2.4 Foster carers help children learn how to protect themselves from abuse and provide a safe and secure home.

6.2.5 Foster carers are trained in child protection, safer caring, risk management, record keeping and understanding abuse and neglect.

6.2.6 Foster carers make appropriate risk assessments in some areas that they have been delegated authority and encouraging children take appropriate risks. For example: Foster carers should determine if a child can stay overnight at a friend’s house by getting to know the child’s friends and their parents or carers.

6.2.7 The Fostering Service (and the services arranged or provided by it) will seek to promote and safeguard the welfare of Looked After Children and other children affected by fostering placements as its paramount concern.

6.3 Helping children to achieve and enjoy what they do.

6.3.1 Foster carers support children and young people to achieve academically. Foster carers take children to and from school until they are old enough to travel by themselves. Foster carers attend parents’ meetings and maintain regular contact with the school. Foster carers participate in the Pupil Education Plan meeting and advocate on behalf of the child where appropriate.

6.3.2 Foster carers ensure that they are supporting children’s education at home by helping with homework, reading to children and playing an active role in the child’s education.
6.3.3 Foster carers support children to engage in a variety of leisure activities that support the child to develop confidence and interests.

6.3.4 Foster carers are provided with training on education and IT skills.

6.3.5 The Fostering Service will work closely with the virtual school and activities officer to ensure that children are able to enjoy and achieve. This includes regular meetings with the team and managers, running service and putting together specialised training for carers.

6.4 Foster carers helping children to make a positive contribution for their future.

6.4.1 Maintaining links for a child with their family, friends and other social and community groups is important. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that these links are maintained and developed when that is in the child’s best interest. Foster carers should support children with contact arrangement and where safe to do so foster carers should take children to contact or facilitate contact within the home.

6.4.2 The majority of children will benefit from placement within a loving and caring family setting. The fostering service seeks to provide this through the foster carers it approves. Children should receive a child friendly foster carers’ profile before they are placed, where possible. Children should also receive a Child’s Guide to Fostering when they are first placed. Children should be made to feel part of the family and not made to feel different than foster carer’s own children.

6.4.3 Children’s wishes and feelings should be taken into account and they should know how to make a complaint.

6.4.4 Placements should take into account children’s ethnicity, religion, language, culture and dietary requirements. Where a need cannot be met directly for example: were a child’s ethnicity is not matched, compensating actions will be taken to ensure that a child will develop a positive view of themselves, their family and cultural background.

6.5 Achieving economic well-being.

6.5.1 Foster carers should save for children regularly and help teach children the importance of saving. Foster carers should open a bank account for children where possible and help to support them to learn budgeting skills.
6.5.2 Foster carers should help prepare children for independent living. This includes helping young people develop practical skills such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, washing and take responsibility for personal healthcare.

6.5.3 Foster carers expected to participate in the Pathway Planning Process so that plan for children is clear and realistic.

6.5.4 Training is provided on preparing young people for independence.


7.1 Recruiting.
The Foster carers’s Recruitment Strategy sets out the plans and targets for foster carer recruitment, the annual budget and how this will be spent and who will undertake tasks.

7.2 Approving.
Foster carers are assessed using the BAAF Form F format. The agency decision maker confirms approvals after recommendations made by the fostering panel. The adoption panel makes these recommendations in long-term cases.

7.3 Training
Training is offered to all foster carers. Initially this is through the preparation course, skills to foster, which prospective carers are expected to undertake during or soon after their assessment has been completed. An annual training programme is offered on a range of topics that seek to ensure the training and development standards for foster carers are met.

7.3.1 The training programme is compatible with the national minimum standards for fostering services and the Caring for Children and Young People QCF diploma that Foster carers can undertake. For more detail see the foster carer’s training programme.

7.3.2 All new foster carers will be expected to complete the required training and development standard workbook within 12 months of being approved to show how they meet the standards and all existing foster carers should have already completed the workbook.
7.4 Support and Supervision of Foster Carers.
As well as the support and supervision offered by Social Workers from the fostering team. Each foster carer has an assigned supervising social workers who supervises and also regularly liaise with other professionals’ i.e Children Service, Health, Virtual School in every four to six weeks. In addition there are further supports available to foster carers:

A) Fee Payment Scheme: Foster carers are paid a taxable fee for the direct tasks they perform and a separate allowance for expenses in relation to the costs of caring for children.

B) Equipment and other provisions: A set-up grant is available at the point of approval for basic items needed such as beds/bedding and wardrobes.

C) Training and support groups: QCF diploma caring for Children and Young People: Foster carers can apply to be assessed for a QCF. This is fully paid for by the service and supported through the annual training programme. The fostering team also provide numerous training courses and a variety of support groups.

D) Looked After Children’s Support and Review Team specialist services: This team offers a comprehensive multi-agency approach to services for looked after children, foster carers and social workers.

E) Membership of Fostering Network: All foster carers have an annual subscription to fostering network paid for by the department. This offers regular mailings, information and helpline on matters relating to foster care and is accessible directly and independently by foster carers.

F) Annual trips and celebrations to show the department’s appreciation of Foster carers.
Activities and events include:

- Long service awards annually
- Foster carers celebration event annually
- Celebratory events for LAC annually

G) Outreach Support: The fostering service can commission St Mark’s outreach to help support placements. St Mark can provide one to one support to a child to provide the carer with some additional support. The outreach service can also provide carers with telephone support throughout the night and weekends.
H) Peer Mentoring: The fostering team has set up a peer mentoring scheme so that newly-approved carers can be paired with a more experienced foster carer within the first year of approval.

I) Duty Support: The fostering team runs a duty service from Monday to Friday between 9 am to 5 pm. The work covered by the duty system is as follows: referrals for foster placements, arrangements for in-house foster placement, and cover for supervising social worker who may be on leave and engaged in other commitments. The duty worker can be contacted via dedicated telephone numbers: 020 8753 2304 and 020 8753 2321.

J) Emergency Duty Support: There is an Emergency Duty Team (EDT) which can provide support to foster carers in the evenings and weekends when children that go missing or where there is an emergency.

7.5 Reviewing.
The fostering Independent reviewing officer chairs all annual reviews of foster carers. This creates independence from the fostering Service line management structure.

7.5.1 At least annually, there is a standardised review process involving foster carers and their families, parents and others with parental responsibility, children and young people, supervising social worker and locality social workers as well as others who might have an interest in the foster placement. The annual review considers the foster carer’s performance during the year, training undertaken, working relationships, finance matters, placements made and their outcomes. They are also able to give their views on placements, how the department and other agencies or professionals have worked with them. Consultation forms are sent out to children who have been placed, as well as parents, foster carers and their children and social workers so that their views too can be included in the review.

7.5.2 The review is usually held within the foster carers’ home with the foster carers, the supervising social Worker and the quality assurance monitoring officer present. Occasionally, others may attend the review including the fostering team manager or principal social worker manager or someone to act as a support or advocate for the foster carer.

7.5.3 The annual review of foster carers document sets out the procedures and guidance for annual reviews and is available from the council’s intranet site and foster carers are given a copy of the document.
8. Complaints

8.1 All local authorities are required to have a Complaints Procedures under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and where children are involved, under the Children Act 1989. There is a central complaints service that manages and monitors complaints for the three Local Authorities. The following is a brief summary.

8.2 At the first stage the complainant should contact the complaints officer to explain the nature of the complaint. If a Court is considering the matter, it cannot be dealt with under the complaints procedure. The complaints officer will refer the matter to the appropriate team manager for investigation (if this has not already been done). The team or service manager will reply to the complainant.

8.3 If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, s/he should be helped or advised as appropriate to make a written representation to the complaints officer asking for a further investigation. There are several ways of dealing with this, but the most usual is for the head of service to appoint an investigating officer (IO) who may either be an officer with no direct line management responsibility for the matter or an independent person. In the case of a complaint under the Children Act 1989, the complaints officer will ask the advocacy officer to appoint an independent person to take part in the investigation and to look after the interests of the child.

8.4 Both the investigating officer and the independent person will write separate reports of the investigation. Normally the reports are sent to the complainant. The reports will be submitted to the senior officer who is the adjudicating officer, usually the director. This officer will reply to the complaint giving his or her decision based on the reports. The procedures require that this reply must be sent to the complainant within 28 days of the complaint having been received.

8.5 If the complainant is not satisfied with the response from the adjudicating officer s/he may request, in writing, that a review panel be appointed. The panel usually consists of an independent chairperson, and two elected members of the council, one minority and one majority party member. Immediately following the hearing the panel will record their recommendation in writing and send it to the complainant, the executive director of the department, the initial independent person and the investigating officer. The executive director will decide what action to take, and will advise the complainant of this.

8.6 This exhausts the council’s own complaints procedure, but in cases of alleged maladministration a complainant may raise the matter with the ‘Local Government Ombudsman’ (who will not take it up until after the Council’s procedures have ended). These procedures do not limit a complainant’s normal legal remedies.

8.7 The Customer Care and Complaints Officer’s Contact details are:
Additionally, in appropriate circumstances, complainants may wish to draw matters to the attention of OFSTED:

Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
T: 0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Contact numbers and e-mail addresses for teams in Fostering and Adoption Service (Tri Borough)

Recruitment (Fostering)
Handles enquiries and support for prospective Foster carers.
T: 0800 169 3497
E: Fostering@rbkc.gov.uk

Recruitment (Adoption)
Handles enquiries and support for prospective adoptive families.
T: 0800 781 2332
E: Adoption@rbkc.gov.uk

Duty, Supervision & Support
Provides a point of contact for borough-based Social Workers who want to place a child with a Foster carer. Handles enquiries and support for Foster carers.
T: 020 8753 2304/020 8753 2321
E: DutyandSupervision@rbkc.gov.uk

Connected Persons
Provides a point of contact for borough-based Social Workers in K&C, WCC & H&F who want to place a child with a member of their extended family.
T: 020 8753 5820
E: FCSCConnectedPersons@rbkc.gov.uk

Permanence
Provides a point of contact for borough-based Social Workers in K&C, WCC & H&F who want to place a child with an adoptive family.
T: 020 8753 2303
E: FCSPermanence@rbkc.gov.uk