

LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

FOSTERING SERVICE 2011/12

Compiled by Carolyn fair
Registered Manager
May 2011

This Statement of Purpose relates to the London Borough of Ealing's Fostering Service under the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. This Statement of Purpose will be kept under review and revised to reflect any changes as and when they occur.

A copy of this will be provided to the OFSTED and be available to:-

1. All staff working for the fostering agency
2. Foster carers
3. Any child placed with foster carers
4. Any parent of a child placed with foster carers

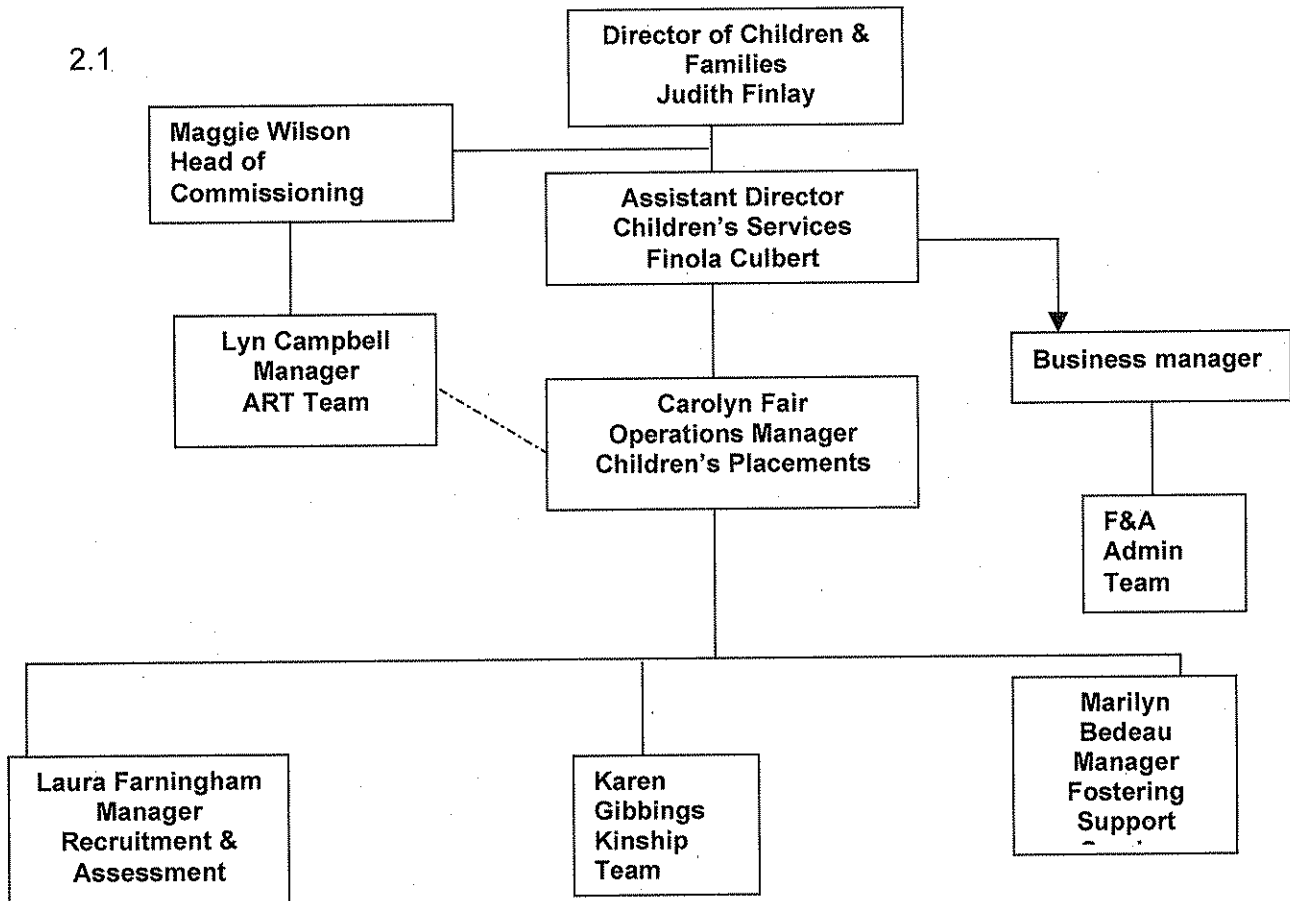
The Fostering Service provider will ensure that the service is at all times conducted in a manner that is consistent with this statement.

1. OVERALL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

- 1.1 To provide a safe and secure environment for Children Looked After by Ealing Council where each child will be nurtured and encouraged to achieve their full potential.
- 1.2 Placements must meet emotional development and spiritual needs of children including their racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious and any other special needs.
- 1.3 Where practicable and appropriate siblings will be placed together.
- 1.4 Unnecessary and multiple placements, moves and breakdowns will be avoided.
- 1.5 Consideration will be given to the child's educational needs in deciding placements.
- 1.6 A foster placement will be considered for all Looked After Children giving due regard to needs of the child and the child's wishes and feelings.
- 1.7 To promote and develop high standards in the placement of children.
- 1.8 To ensure that the needs of Looked After Children are matched and met within the placements made.
- 1.9 To ensure that all avenues of the child remaining with his/her birth family or extended family network are considered, providing that this is consistent with the child's welfare.

2. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

2.1.



All social workers, managers and deputies hold a social work qualification. Support workers have relevant childcare experience and receive training and support from qualified staff. Other staff have relevant skills and experience to meet the requirements of their duties and responsibilities.

2.2 The Operations Manager Children's Placements is responsible for the fostering service. The service consists of three teams that are managed by 3 managers. The team comprises:

1. Recruitment and Assessment Team
2. Fostering Support Team
3. Kinship Fostering Team

In addition the service works closely with the Access to Resources Team, whose prime responsibility is to source placements for Looked After Children. An administration team supports the service.

3. SERVICES PROVIDED

Each fostering team has a distinct function and role within the wider placement service. The teams aim to work together to ensure the provision of a wide range of placements, through our in-house resources and through private and voluntary providers. The fostering service works in collaboration with the area children's social work teams to ensure the welfare of all 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 Ealing. We work within a child-centred, multi-disciplinary and anti-discriminatory framework.

4. ACCESS TO RESOURCES TEAM (ART)

4.1 Aim

ART provides a one-stop access point for all children and young people's placements and related services. It provides a cohesive approach to placement planning and enables the Department to make best use of in-house resources. It allows the service to make gains in terms of the procurement of value-for-money services from the Private and Voluntary sector, whilst ensuring that the highest standards of care are given to 'looked after' children and young people.

4.2 Structure

ART is line managed by the Head of Commissioning, but works closely with the fostering service. The team consists of the following posts:

- Social Work Team Manager
- Duty Social Worker
- Contracts Manager
- Commissioning Officers x 6

4.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEAM

4.3.1 The Duty Service

4.3.2 The service processes all referrals for the placement of 'looked after' children, semi independence placements, specialist education placements and placements for children with disabilities. Placements are sought from a wide range of agencies.

4.3.3 Placements are identified from within the existing 'in-house' provision or from preferred and accredited external resources, which meet Looked after Children's identified needs and which reflect best value. These include:

- In-house fostering service
- In-house residential services
- Independent Fostering Agencies
- P&V residential services
- Residential family assessment centres
- Mother and Baby Units
- Secure provision
- Semi-independent and Care Leavers placements
- Special schools

4.3.4 The service operates a 'duty' service from 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. The service responds to resource enquiries and information requests, and will provide consultation and advice.

4.3.5 The service is responsible for identifying appropriate placements; obtaining statutory and regulatory checks; negotiating initial placement costs and additional costs; and ensuring that the completed Placement Agreement accurately reflects the agreed package.

4.3.6 The service 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. It has up-to-date knowledge of acceptance criteria, referral system and care practices.

4.3.7 The service investigates complaints and concerns about external resources, reports on these and makes recommendations as to further action. The service maintains information on complaints concerns and care standards issues.

4.3.8 The service participates in the Private & Voluntary Panel (P&V). Requests for expenditure are processed and information about case plans and cost information is provided. The team works closely with the Business Support Team to ensure compliance in terms of negotiated packages and invoices.

4.4 Contracts Service

- 4.4.1 The team undertakes the accreditation of identified external provision under the terms of the Pan London contract. The team plays an active role in the Pan London agenda to ensure that the authority is able to take full advantage of the knowledge and information that it maintains on external resources.
- 4.4.2 The service visits external placements that are not accredited by Pan London within 5 working days of the commencement of the placement. It reports back as to the suitability of the resource by way of a written report and makes recommendations as to the appropriateness of taking forward an accreditation of the resource.
- 4.4.3 The team liaises with external providers and develops preferred provider relationships.
- 4.4.4 The service monitors all Placement Agreements and issues amendments as requested by the Placements service.
- 4.4.5 The service negotiates contracts with Independent Fostering Agencies who are providing permanent carers for a child and with whom a specific package of care and costs are required to secure the placement.
- 4.4.6 The service puts out to tender any aspect of the work of the division as and when required.
- 4.4.7 The service puts in place contracts with external agencies as and when required and monitors the contracts.

4.5 ART Social Work Service

- 4.5.1 The service manages and takes responsibility for the overall work of ART and establishes a sound balance between professional practice and efficient resource management.
- 4.5.2 The service convenes a weekly Children's Meeting in order to aid the Department in monitoring planning for the 'looked after' population, ensuring that plans are viable, effective and carried out in a reasonable timescale so as to avoid drift.
- 4.5.3 The Service assists the Department in identifying children and young people who have had numerous care episodes or have had numerous placement breakdowns and will work closely with the area teams to identify an appropriate plan and placement for those children who have complex needs.

4.5.4 The service identifies children over the age of 11 years for whom a permanent home has not be established and will convene Multi-Disciplinary Planning Meetings to refocus the planning and ensure a permanent home is found.

5.0 RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT TEAM

This team undertakes all publicity and marketing to recruit short-term and long-term foster carers, and prospective adoptive carers. In addition Family Link carers offering short-term breaks are recruited for children with disabilities as well as carers for the Sitting Service. The team undertakes preparation and assessment of all short-term and long-term foster carers, foster carer reviews and permanency planning for children between the ages of 7 – 14.

5.1 Aims and Objectives

- 5.1.1 The team aims to recruit and assess the maximum number of foster carers who can meet the diverse needs of Ealing's children and young people, by raising awareness of the needs for Ealing to recruit new foster carers for local children of all ages, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. This is achieved through advertising, marketing in the local press, distribution of information leaflets via libraries, medical centre waiting rooms and other public locations in the Borough and to place at specific times (e.g. Adoption Week and Fostering Fortnight) displays in position at key local venues e.g. Perceval House, Leisure Centers, during Adoption week and Fostering Fortnight.

5.2 Structure

- 5.2.1 The team is line managed by the Operations Manager for Children's Placements Services and consists of the following:

- Team Manager
- Deputy Team Manager
- 5 Social Workers
- Carer Co-ordinator
- Recruitment Officer
- Marketing Co-ordinator

5.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Marketing

- 5.3.1 To market the service within the stated aims and objectives in accordance with the Recruitment strategy, using a variety of techniques, which include:
- Consultation with existing and potential foster carers, key figures in the community and the general public.
 - Research, which includes national research and demographic study based on local information.
 - Liaison with diverse local community groups through outreach work and events e.g. Mosques, Temples, Churches and Lesbian & Gay Community.
 - Advertising in the local and specialist press.
- 5.3.2 The Carer Finder Bonus Scheme rewards approved carers who recommend someone in their network to become an approved carer (does not include sitters). Carers are given £200 in high street store vouchers upon approval.
- 5.3.3 To provide a professional, co-ordinated approach to all response mechanisms and materials and maintain a consistent visual appearance to all items respondents receive.
- 5.3.4 To make effective links with the local community.
- 5.3.5 To produce all materials in plain English avoiding jargon and where necessary to provide information in other languages.
- 5.3.6 To communicate in a welcoming and friendly manner with a customer care focus.

5.4 Recruitment (refer to recruitment and assessment policy).

- 5.4.1 Recruitment of short-term foster carers in accordance with the procedure for children and young people aged 0 – 18. Recruitment is targeted to meet the diverse needs of Looked after Children.
- 5.4.2 Recruitment of long-term foster carers for children and young people between the ages of 7 – 14. Extending this age range for young people with disabilities, who require a permanent home within a family setting.
- 5.4.3 Recruitment of adopters to meet the needs of children waiting for adoptive placements and the estimated and predicted placement requirements. This is based on the number of children and young people in the system, their specific requirements in terms of age, ethnicity, religion, language, any other particular needs they have and whether they are part of a sibling group.

- 5.4.4 Recruitment of Family Link Carers. Family Link Carers are recruited in the same way as Foster Carers. Additional and specific advertisements may be placed. After attending an information session and having an initial home visit they are invited to a specialist preparation group. They are allocated for assessment, relevant checks processed and then applications are taken to the fostering panel for approval.
- 5.4.5 Recruitment of Sitters. Sitters are employed as casual 'as and when' employees of the Council. They undergo the Council's procedures for selection – short-listing and interview. Following this they are invited to a preparation group with the Family Link Carers. On completion of this and appropriate checks, they are invited for an induction session where they sign contracts, receive a handbook, information on Council procedures and begin to be matched for their first family link.
- 5.4.6 Information sessions for both foster carers and adopters are held on a monthly basis rotating between day and evening sessions. Attendees receive a pack with handouts from the presentation and other relevant literature and promotional materials. Existing foster carers and adopters are invited to each session.
- 5.4.7 Initial home visits are undertaken to all foster carers and family link carers within 28 days of the information session.
- 5.4.8 Preparation groups are held for foster carers. These ensure that participants are suitably skilled to provide high quality care to the children and young people placed with them. A minimum of 4 groups is held per year.
- 5.4.9 The content of each group is set within an equalities and anti-discriminatory framework and covers the following topics:

- Motivation
- Understanding the assessment process
- Support networks
- Role and expectations of foster carers
- Understanding of children's needs
- Challenging stereotypes of families, different alternatives to families
- Child protection, children's rights
- Children Act, Human Rights Act
- Safe caring
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Diversity
- Parenting capacity
- Attachment and separation
- Health & safety

5.5 Assessment

- 5.5.1 Health and safety checks are undertaken in line with the Health and Safety guidance notes (see carers' pack) and are carried out with all foster carers and adopters by staff experienced and proficient in this area of work.
- 5.5.2 Form F assessments are undertaken with all foster carers including Family Link carers. The assessments are undertaken in line with the British Agency for Adoption and Fostering's (BAAF) 'Form F assessment'. The assessment covers areas as laid out in Schedule 3. Social workers have a target of completing an assessment within 4 months of allocation. A minimum of three referees is sought.
- 5.5.3 A first draft of an assessment report is sent to the Support Team at 3 months, the Support Team allocates a supervising social worker, a joint visit to the carer is arranged and the assessing social worker and supervising social worker attend Panel. The assessing social worker continues to support the foster carer until their first placement is made. The carer is then transferred to the Fostering Support Team.
- 5.5.4 Long-term foster carers continue to be supported by the family finding Social Worker until the child's first statutory review - or the first 4 weeks after placement if no review is due - in cases where the placement is ongoing.
- 5.5.5 To ensure that the needs of individual children and young people requiring long-term fostering are met through the planning process.

5.6 Family Finding

- 5.6.1 Family finding for children and young people 7-14 is undertaken within the team. Permanent placements are effected through the permanency planning process.

5.7 Foster Carer Reviews

- 5.7.1 As of March 2010, all Fostering Reviews are carried out by Aidhour. These Independent Reviewing Officers chair foster carer reviews and collate information about the practice standards of the department and the fostering service. It reports on the themes and issues that emerge with regard to the standard of the services offered to Looked After Children and services to foster carers and develops actions to address identified need.

6.0 FOSTERING SUPPORT SERVICE

This team provides support and supervision of all placements of children placed with Ealing in-house foster carers. All carers are allocated a supervising worker. Short-term carers are visited every 3 weeks and long-term carers every 6 weeks. In addition the team offers monthly support groups and social events and training for carers.

6.1 Aim and objectives

- 6.1.1 The team aims to provide a professional management, supervision, training and support service to foster carers and their families to enable them to provide high quality, safe and effective care to children/young people looked after by Ealing. This is to be achieved through providing opportunities for foster carers to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, information and advice in order to meet the needs of children in their care and through access to other relevant services to meet the needs of children in their care e.g. education, psychology and youth service input.

6.2 Structure

- 6.2.1 The team is based at Perceval House and is line managed by the Operations Manager for Children's Placement Services. The team consists of the following:

- Team Manager
- Deputy Team manager
- Senior Social worker
- 4 Social Workers
- 4 supervising support workers

- Training and Development Officer

6.2.2 In addition the team works closely with a looked after children's psychologist, a LAC nurse, substance misuse team, an education team of five teachers, and the Horizons Centre specifically for looked after children.

6.3 Supervision and support of Foster carers

6.3.1 To undertake regular supervisory visits to foster carers' homes and make telephone contact in between visits. Support levels are agreed with the foster carer and reviewed in supervision.

6.3.2 To ensure information held on carers is up to date, including all statutory checks, composition of the household and foster carer reviews.

6.3.3 To ensure all foster carers receive up-to-date policies and procedures included in the foster carers' handbook and ensure that foster carers are aware and compliant with policy and guidelines as set out in the Foster Carers' Handbook.

6.3.4 To ensure any concerns about the care of children are addressed and procedures followed when allegations and complaints arise.

6.3.5 To ensure home visits include inspection of the home environment and standard of care offered to the child.

6.3.6 To monitor the foster carer's training and support needs, identifying and understanding the carer's strengths and weaknesses. The carer's development is facilitated by the link worker/foster carer relationship and mutually agreed objectives are set for the year.

6.3.7 To undertake the foster carer review annually, giving the opportunity to formally appraise the carer and plan for the forthcoming year.

6.3.8 To maintain the foster carer file, this should include records of supervisory meetings. Information about children in placement must be recorded on the child's electronic file.

6.3.9 To progress financial and insurance requests and payments on behalf of carers.

6.3.10 To ensure the carer has all the appropriate LAC forms and that the Placement Agreement Meeting is held within the required timescales.

6.3.11 To progress placements and ensure that occupancy levels are maintained to the optimum level.

- 6.3.12 To maintain and provide information on the availability of in- house placements and to ensure the Access to Resources Team and all necessary information about carers to aid the decision-making process.
- 6.3.13 To operate a duty system during office hours an Out-of-Hours service to carers.
- 6.3.14 To facilitate monthly support group meetings and encourage carers to attend.
- 6.3.15 To monitor the development of the child in placement and keep up to date with the progress of the child's Care Plan. To ensure that placements continue to meet the child's needs and that any difficulty that the foster carer has in meeting the child's needs is addressed.
- 6.3.16 To communicate regularly with the child's social worker and undertake joint visits to the placement, exchange recordings of home visits to support good communication.
- 6.3.17 To undertake regular meetings with the child's Family Finder.
- 6.3.18 To attend the child's Statutory Reviews and Planning Meetings.
- 6.3.19 To complete a Change of Circumstances form upon any change in a foster placement, to facilitate up-to-date maintenance of the database of children in placement.
- 6.3.20 To take part in planning, taking an active role in all annual events i.e. Rising Stars Day, Outer Limits Day (which focus on improving children and young people's life chances) and Carer Awards evening and other activities that involve carers.
- 6.3.21 To ensure that the service is compliant with the Fostering National Standards.

6.4 Training and development of carers

- 6.4.1 To provide a comprehensive training programme that meets the training and development needs of carers.
- 6.4.2 To identify gaps in carers' skills and knowledge and develop training to address this.
- 6.4.3 To facilitate and encourage progression through the foster carers' progression scheme where appropriate.

6.5 Financial Support

6.5.1 Ealing's foster carer allowance scheme was revised and implemented in May 2005. It was reviewed in 2011, and increased fees were implemented in April 2011. This provides a career structure for carers and links fees to training. The allowances are paid in 3 parts:

- The allowance
- The fee
- Training enhancement

6.5.2 All carers receive the allowance in respect of each child in placement. Carers who meet the criteria to receive the fee and training enhancement receive these payments.

6.5.3 Foster carers are paid on a weekly basis and receive a payslip detailing the payment, as well as an annual statement of allowances paid.

7.0 KINSHIP FOSTERING SERVICE

The Kinship team is a specialist resource for kinship carers that undertake assessment and support of foster carers approved for looking after specific children only.

7.1 Aim

To provide a comprehensive assessment, support and supervision service to carers approved to care for specific children only. The service aims to tailor individual packages of support and address issues that are particular to this type of fostering arrangement.

7.2 Structure

The team consists of

- Team manager (P/T)
- Senior Social Worker
- 3 Social Workers
- Social Work Assistant
- Family Group Conference Co-ordinator

7.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.3.1 To complete short term fostering assessments of all kinship carers
- 7.3.2 To supervise and support kinship fostering placements
- 7.3.3 To provide support and advice to area colleagues on undertaking kinship assessments
- 7.3.4 To complete all permanency assessments of kinship carers where children are looked after or the case is in proceedings and/or an interim supervision order has been made
- 7.3.5 To complete all SGO assessments for LAC and CIN
- 7.3.6 To co-ordinate other teams in placement services or independent social workers to complete any work that cannot be completed by the Kinship team
- 7.3.7 To provide a special guardianship support service
- 7.3.8 To operate a duty system two days a week to undertake regulation 24 assessments and make decisions on these placements. Also to undertake viability assessments where children are looked after or are about to become looked after.

8.0 ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT

- 8.1 The role of the Admin support team is to ensure support to the workers and managers within the teams. This is provided by:
 - 8.1.1 The Panel Coordinator who is responsible for administering the Fostering Panels by ensuring the meetings are properly coordinated and that accurate minutes are recorded. The Panel Coordinator ensures that the decisions are recorded onto the database and that all the notifications are signed, issued and stored on file.
 - 8.1.2 The Apprentice and the Records Assistant are responsible for maintaining all files ensuring they are stored in the correct place. All the Children's and Carer's current files are located in the office and the back volumes are archived off site at the Registry. Closed Children's, Adults and closed Families files are also located off site. They also process checks and close Foster Carers enquiries. They prepare the paperwork for Access to Records enquiries.

- 8.1.3 Team Admin Officers are attached to the teams and are responsible for providing effective admin support to the teams they are attached to. They are responsible for taking telephone messages, compiling mail merges and reports, data cleansing, updating the database, issuing letters and carrying out statutory checks. The officers are also responsible for processing annual foster carer reviews by updating the management information systems and specific team reports. They also process the sitters' timesheets and change of circumstances.
- 8.1.4 The whole team provide duty cover by ensuring there is sufficient admin support on a daily basis by processing invoices, issuing travel warrants, incoming post and assisting the workers with IT support training and answering general enquiries.

8.2 BUSINESS SUPPORT

- 8.1.1 The Business Support Officer is responsible for making weekly payments to Foster Carers. The officer ensures that the database records are kept up to date to ensure that the correct payments are made on time. All payments are paid in arrears
- 8.1.2 The Officer runs budget forecasts for all placements on a monthly basis, which is given to the Finance Team and the Managers to allow them to monitor their individual team budgets.

9.0 SPECIALIST SUPPORT SERVICES

- 9.1 Carers may access the Looked after Children's Education team on education matters. This team assists and advises on school admissions, liaison with schools, and any matters related to education. The primary aim of this service is to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children. Carers are invited to make nominations for the annual Education Awards, which celebrates young people's achievements. Carers also receive regular training on education issues.
- 9.1.2 A nurse for looked after children and a paediatric doctor is available for consultation on health issues. The nurse will visit carers and children in their homes.
- 9.1.3 Windmill Lodge is the local CAMHS service based at Ealing hospital. CAMHS works with children as well as carers if appropriate. They also offer a transition project, which offers a service to children who have experienced multiple moves.
- 9.1.4 The SAFE Team is based at Acton Town Hall, Northolt and Southall. The remit of this team is to undertake preventative work with families to prevent reception into care, as well as to prevent placement breakdown. They offer brief therapy and play therapy and will work with carers as well as with children and young people.

9.1.5 The psychologist for Looked After Children is a joint post between CAMHS and social services. This post works closely with the Fostering Service to ensure stability of placements. The post holder offers consultation to carers and professionals, undertakes direct work with carers and children, and undertakes assessment of needs and delivers training to foster carers and social workers.

10.0 FOSTER CARERS AND PLACEMENTS AT 31st March 2011

The fostering service support to;

97 fostering households

28 kinship households

134 children placed with in-house foster carers

37 children placed with kinship carers

12 Family Link carers

20 children receiving short breaks.

11. COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

The fostering service responds to complaints and allegations in respect of foster carers. This procedure is laid out in the policy 'Dealing with allegations and complaints against foster carers.' Information about how to make a complaint is included in the foster carers handbook and in the information pack for young people.

12. PRINCIPLES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

To ensure:

- that staff are well trained and competent in delivering a quality fostering service;
- that there are clear lines of accountability and management of the service;
- that all staff and carers have a valid satisfactory CRB check;
- that the service operates within the framework of equality of opportunity;
- that the service recognises and values the diverse nature of the community it serves;
- that all placements are monitored and supervised;
- that staff and carers receive support and supervision
- that the health, educational and social needs of children are met within placements and life chances of children enhanced;
- that allegations against carers/staff are investigated under departmental procedures
- that systems are in place to monitor the department's needs in terms of placement. This information is used to inform recruitment and contracting with providers;
- that all foster placements provide a safe, secure environment for children placed;
- that children will be matched with carers who are best able to meet the identified needs of the child;
- that life skills and opportunities are made available to all children appropriate to their age and developmental needs;
- that the service is committed to meeting and enhancing the learning and developmental needs of staff and carers;
- that the service has a clear strategy for the support of foster carers ensuring each foster carer has access to a supervising social worker;
- that the service ensures that there are comprehensive and up-to-date records on all children placed and all foster carers including recording of potential foster carers in the recruitment process. This information is accessible in line with data protection regulation;
- that the service has clear administrative records and financial management systems pertinent to the running of the service;
- that the 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 that the welfare and safety of children is paramount in all decision making;

- that the service ensures there is a range of safe and appropriate placements for Looked After Children in Ealing
- that placements within or close to the Borough are sought, which can best meet the child's needs with local support.

Carolyn Fair
Registered Manager
May 2011