

London Borough of Newham
Private Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2021/22



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1. Introduction

This Statement of Purpose explains our vision, objectives and services provided by Children's Social Care to identify, monitor and support Private Fostering arrangements in Newham. In doing so it sets out how the service meets the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005.

The services to Private Foster Carers and children being cared for in these arrangements, is within the duties of the Fostering Team, part of Newham Children and Young People's Services.

This Statement of Purpose is updated regularly and reviewed by the Lead Member for Children's Services. It is available to staff, Private Foster Carers, children and young people, other professionals and the public upon request.

The legislative framework for private fostering arrangements was established within the Children Act 1989 and continues in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 together with the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering which came into force in July 2005.

2. Legal Definition

The definition of a privately fostered child:

A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under aged 18 if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

"A private fostering arrangement is one that is:

- made privately, without the involvement of a local authority,
- for the care of a child under the age of 16 (or up to age 18, if the child is disabled)
- for care of the child, provided by someone other than a parent or close relative"

A "close relative" is defined as:

- Grandparent,
- Brother or Sister,
- Uncle or Aunt, or
- Step-parent;
- and be a full or half relation by blood or marriage.

Private foster carers may be from the extended family such as a cousin or a great aunt. However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989, i.e., a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) or step-parent will not be a private foster carer.

A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child. The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the foster carer should be continuous by that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break.

- *Legal Definitions of other arrangements*

A child's caring arrangement is not considered to be a Private Fostering arrangement when:

- ❖ The carer is the child's parent
- ❖ The carer has parental responsibility
- ❖ The carer is an approved foster carer and the placement was made by Children & Young People's Authority.
- ❖ The placement lasts for less than 28 days.

The arrangement should last for 28 days or more to be considered a privately fostered arrangement and the period should be continuous.

Some common examples of private fostering arrangements include: children/young people with families overseas; children and young people with parents working or studying in the UK; trafficked children and young people and unaccompanied children and young people and refugees; children/young people living with host families for a variety of reasons, i.e. attending language schools, undergoing medical treatment etc.

With all Private Fostering arrangements, the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child remains with the parent or person with parental responsibility.

If you are looking after someone else's child, or are considering doing so, please refer to Newham's *Family and Friends Policy* on the fostering page of Newham.gov website. The *Family and Friends Policy* will clarify what constitutes a private fostering arrangement and outlines other arrangements where a child is unable to live with their birth parents.

3. Examples of Private Fostering relationships

Some common examples of circumstances in which Private Fostering arrangements may occur;

- ❖ Children living with a friend's family due to family breakdown or parent's ill health.
- ❖ Children whose parent work commitments takes them away from the home for more than 28 days and the child is residing with a carer who is not a 'close relative'.
- ❖ A teenager "sofa surfing" and living with friends or in the home of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- ❖ Overseas students who are living with a carer or 'host family' for over 28 days.
- ❖ Children who are attending independent schools, boarding schools or language schools and living with a carer 'host family' for over 28 days.
- ❖ Unaccompanied children who arrive in the UK seeking asylum and residing with a carer who is not a 'close relative'.
- ❖ Children who are brought into the UK with a view to adoption and residing with a carer who is not a 'close relative' will be privately fostered until formal notice of intention to apply to adopt is given to the local authority.

4. The Local Authority's Duties and Functions under the Children Act 1989 and Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005

The duties of the Local Authority in relation to private fostering are set out in the Children Act 1989, the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and, amendments are contained within the Children Act 2004. The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 set out a number of standards to be met by all Local Authorities in discharging their duties which cover the following areas:

- Statement of Purpose;
- Notification;
- Safeguarding and promoting welfare;
- Advice and support;
- Monitoring and compliance.

Local Authorities have a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are privately fostered in their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted and to secure that such advice is given to those caring for them as appears to the Authority to be needed (The Children Act 1989 Section 67(1) and Section 44 the Children Act 2004). The Local Authority needs to ensure the following duties and functions are carried out:

Where the Local Authority has received notification under Regulation 3 (The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005) they must arrange for an officer of the Authority within seven working days to:

- Visit the premises where it is proposed that the child will be cared for and accommodated;
- Visit and speak to the proposed private foster carer and to all members of the household;
- Visit and speak to the privately fostered child alone unless the officer considers it inappropriate;
- Speak to and if it is practicable to do so, visit every parent or person with **Parental Responsibility** for the child; and
- Establish such matters listed in Schedule 2 (2005 Regulations as above) as appear to the officer to be relevant.

5. Our vision for Children and Young People

Our vision as set out in the Newham Children's Services Strategic Improvement Plan 2020 is to ensure each one of our 86,085 children and young people will:

- Grow up happy, healthy and safe.
- To flourish in our schools.
- To benefit from employment, skills and training opportunities.
- Play an active role in the community.

Our primary objectives with private fostering arrangements are to:

- a. Ensure that proposed or actual Private Foster Care arrangements across the borough do not pose any risk to the child. **(NMS 3)**
- b. Develop a high level of awareness throughout the borough of what constitutes a Private Fostering arrangement, and the notification requirements, both among the public and professionals working with children. **(NMS 2)**
- c. Ensure that, once registered, Private Foster Carers are fully supported to deliver the best possible outcomes for the household and children. **(NMS 4,5 & 6)**
- d. Ensure that Privately Fostered children are provided with information about their care, consulted as to their wishes and feelings, and are able to be healthy, happy, and achieve their aspirations in a Private Foster setting. **(NMS 6)**
- e. That where an existing Private Fostering relationship is assessed as not being in the best interests of the child, action is taken to improve practice in the interest of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child. **(NMS 7)**
- f. Ensure that proposed or actual Private Foster Care arrangements across the borough do not pose any risk to the child. **(NMS 3)**
- g. Develop a high level of awareness throughout the borough of what constitutes a Private Fostering arrangement, and the notification requirements, both among the public and professionals working with children. **(NMS 2)**
- h. Ensure that, once registered, Private Foster Carers are fully supported to deliver the best possible outcomes for the household and children. **(NMS 4,5 & 6)**
- i. Ensure that Privately Fostered children are provided with information about their care, consulted as to their wishes and feelings, and are able to be healthy, happy, and achieve their aspirations in a Private Foster setting. **(NMS 6)**
- j. That where an existing Private Fostering relationship is assessed as not being in the best interests of the child, action is taken to improve practice in the interest of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child. **(NMS 7)**

The Private Fostering Service will focus particularly on two of Newham's key obsessions; improving the care experience and increasing support to families.

Our commitment to the vision and obsessions is crucial to children living in privately fostered arrangements to ensure they have the same advantages as any other Newham child.

This framework is underpinned by our:

- Practice Fundamentals: Planned, Purposeful and focussed.
- Professional Practice and Management Standards

- Children and Young Peoples' Service Strategic Vision and Operational Plan
- Workforce: training and development)
- Practice learning activity: audit, feedback, observation, planning
- Practice & outcomes meetings: learning loops, team learning
- Feedback from children, young people, families, members of staff and partners: improved outcomes, evidence informed service improvement.

Learning from practice is the responsibility of all practitioners supported by every level of the organisation. Services provided and commissioned by the Directorate work towards the highest possible standards of practice, governed and overseen by the Director of Children's Services and Newham's Children and Young People's Commissioner.

The responsibility for coordinating the Practice Learning Framework and evaluating that services are improving rests with the Quality Assurance Team in conjunction with practice leaders and colleagues from Learning and Development and from across the partnership. Some of our Practice Learning Framework will challenge, some of it will reassure. All aspects should feel a part of a considered, respectful, multi-faceted, strengths based approach to quality assuring our work.

With the express aim of practice and performance being informed by our 6 C's:



6. Our Principles and Approach

- ❖ We recognise that Newham's Private Foster Carers are an important part of the range of Family and Friends carers in the borough, and that many such arrangements improve the quality of life for parents and children across Newham.
- ❖ Provided that care is of a sufficient and stable character, Private Foster Carers and children in these arrangements will be fully supported to remain safe and successful in their setting.
- ❖ No child will be left to 'drift' in unsuitable care, and we commit as a partnership to ensuring at least as good outcomes or better for children in private foster care, than a child growing up in their birth family.
- ❖ The wishes, feelings and aspirations of Privately Fostered children are central to our decision making process and also inform the way in which we deliver services. We have expanded our conversation via child consultation forms and case reviews focused on the wishes and feelings of the child.
- ❖ The Local Authority will take the lead on ensuring high public awareness of the Private Fostering Agenda to improve notifications. We also recognise the importance of ongoing liaison with our partnership agencies including health and education.
- ❖ We are aware that responses to Private Fostering matters are the responsibility of social workers and other professionals across Safeguarding Services and partner agencies.
- ❖ We will improve the quality of data and monitoring around our service so that we can be sure we are:
 - i) performing well as an organisation and ii) delivering better outcomes for young people. We will continue to consistently monitor against quality standards to ensure consistent and sustained improvement.
- ❖ We respect and protect the right to privacy for our children and their families including their feelings and wishes, their personal data and their right to pursue their own lives and develop successfully.

7. Our Staff

The management team of the Fostering Service, as of 31st March 2021 includes the following:

- Head of Care Provision and Support, Service Manager Fostering, Adoption and Pause and three Practice Leads.

One Practice Lead manages the Carer Recruitment Team; staff in that team are responsible for the recruitment and assessment of prospective Foster Carers including Connected Person's and Special Guardian Carers. In addition, they are responsible for providing Post Support between Special Guardian Carers and Birth Families. The Carer Recruitment team consists of one Recruitment Officer and four Social Workers. The other two Practice Leads are responsible for the supervision and support of Foster Carers. The Fostering Team consists of eleven Supervising Social Workers. The Fostering Support Team Practice Lead and Private Fostering Lead are responsible for the supervision and support of private foster carers. The Private Fostering Team consists of one social worker. The Fostering service as a whole is supported by designated officers in the Business Support Team, including one designated Panel Administrator.

The management team of the Fostering Service consists of:

Mussarat Gul (Service Manager, Fostering, Adoption and Pause) qualified in 1997 and holds a Diploma in Social Work. She also holds an MSc in Social Work, a DMS and MBA in public services. She has 15 years' experience in childcare starting her social work career in the Amber Project, a residential unit which undertook court directed assessments. She then went on to manage an adolescent team for children in need.

Mussarat has managed Placement Services since 2010, prior to which she held the post of Senior Manager of the Adoption Team. She has been a panel member for both the fostering and adoption panels and is currently the Professional Advisor for the Fostering Panel.

Suzette Du Rand (Practice Leader, Fostering) qualified in 1979 and holds a BSc in Social Work. Suzette started her social work career working within generic placements in her country of birth South Africa. She moved on to specialise within a fostering and adoption team.

For the next ten years Suzette's next role was in a therapeutic setting within children's homes. She then went on to manage a Community Development team specialising within the field of families living with HIV and Aids.

Suzette immigrated to the UK in 2004, and for the first year worked in the Children in Need Team before transferring to the Fostering Team. Becoming Deputy Team Manager of the Fostering Team in 2010, Suzette has held the

position of Team Manager since March 2013. Suzette is a permanent employee.

Mark Thompson (Practice Lead) qualified in 1999 with a Diploma and BSc (Hons) Degree in Social Work and is practice teacher qualified. Mark has gained significant experience of child care having worked with disabled children, looked after children and in child protection teams in the public sector.

Mark joined the Fostering Team in 2011, as Senior Social Worker responsible for Private Fostering. He became Deputy Team Manager in March 2013.

Mark is a permanent employee with extensive knowledge of working with young people who have been fostered.

Nasim Ahmed (Private Fostering Lead Social Worker) qualified in 1997 with a Diploma in Social Work and obtained Post Qualifying Child Care Award in 2004. Nasim is a permanent employee and has been employed by Newham since 1998.

Nasim has extensive social work experience in working within the Children and Young People Services in statutory social work teams within Newham which includes Children In Need, Family Support Team, Residential Assessment Unit (Amber Project) Family Resource Centre, Young People's Family Assistant and Support Team. Nasim has worked as a Consulting Social worker in the Youth Offending Service in offering advice to staff on safeguarding matters. Between 2011 July 2013 she managed one of the Locality Early Intervention Team / Children's Centre.

Nasim joined the Private Fostering team in July 2013. Her role is to ensure that all private fostering arrangements across the borough are notified to the team with regular support and monitoring taking place of the known private fostering arrangements.

Jennifer Trevisan (Private Fostering Social Worker) qualified in 2019 with a Diploma in Social Work as part of the Step Up to Social Work Scheme. She completed her ASYE in the Private Fostering Team the following year and has remained in this post.

8. Our Vision for Children and Young People

The Private Fostering Service will focus particularly on two of Newham's key obsessions; improving the care experience and increasing support to families.

a. Awareness campaign

The Local Authority has a duty to promote Private Fostering awareness throughout the borough to parents, people with parental responsibility, existing

Private Foster carers, prospective Private Foster carers and the general public. This is to ensure potential and actual Private Fostering are aware of their responsibility to notify the local authority of the proposed or existing Private Fostering arrangement.

Our aim is for us to be aware of all Private Fostering arrangements within Newham.

We have two leaflets, one specific to children and young people in Private Fostering arrangements and the second leaflet aimed at parents and the carers outlining their responsibilities. These leaflets together with posters are distributed in contact centres, libraries, schools, community centres and GP surgeries and health centres throughout the borough. In addition, articles are placed in the Newham Connect, encouraging notification of potential Private Fostering arrangements.

The Fostering Practice Lead and the Private Fostering Lead social worker have the responsibility to attend all Children and Young People's Teams Service Area Meetings and to partner agencies to promote awareness of what a Private Fostering arrangement is and to ensure professionals are aware of the notification protocols to the MASH team. There is also a Private Fostering Workflow and a 'quick guide for professionals' detailing notification process.

We are increasing our links with other agencies such as early help, schools, GP's, the Metropolitan police, CAMHS and youth offending services to ensure notifications increase through the targeted activity within our partnership agencies.

b. Notifications

Under Regulation 4 (1) & (2) statutory requirements we will respond to all notifications of private fostering arrangements within 48 hours and complete any necessary initial assessments within 7 days.

c. Assessment of children in Private Foster Care Arrangement

This part of the service is delivered by the Assessment Team in collaboration with the Private Fostering Service.

Following notification of a Private Fostering arrangement to Newham MASH team, the private fostering team is alerted via the Contact Referral Record. This generates an initial discussion prior to arranging the Regulation 4 & 7 visit by the Assessment Service Social Worker. With confirmation of the private fostering arrangement following the Regulation 4 & 7 visit, a joint visit is scheduled with the private fostering team to support the Private Fostering Single Assessment process in providing support and guidance. The private fostering service maintain an oversight from the point of Notification and commencement of the Single Assessment and remain involved during the

review process prior to the conclusion and ratification of the PF arrangement in accordance with the Children's (Private Arrangements For Fostering) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards For Private Fostering 2005.

Cases where there are safeguarding concerns will remain within the Safeguarding and Intervention Team until there are no longer safeguarding concerns. If the Single Assessment indicates that the child is 'in need' as defined by section 17 of the Children Act 1989, an Intervention Team social worker or Early Help Intervention worker will remain involved with the family to support and monitor the child/ren to achieve their aspirations and build resilience within the household and local community. The Private Fostering Services will continue to have an oversight in these cases via the 6 monthly Private Fostering Panel process.

The Private Fostering Service is committed to the ongoing delivery of awareness training and providing assessment guidance for all of the service teams.

d. Assessment and monitoring of Private Fostering Arrangements

This part of the service is delivered through Fostering Services.

Where it is confirmed that a Private Fostering arrangement is in place and there are no assessed safeguarding concerns, the case will transfer to the Private Fostering Service who will maintain a monitoring role and complete Regulation 8 visits to the Private Foster setting (6 weekly in the first year of arrangement and 12 weekly in the second year and onwards). This is to ensure the child is safe and appropriately cared for within the arrangement and that support and advice is provided to the privately fostered child, carer, parents or persons with parental responsibility.

The private fostering social worker will make additional visits to a privately fostered child when reasonably requested by the child, the private foster carer, the child's parents or any other person with parental responsibility for the child. Both private fostering social worker will ensure that privately fostered children are seen alone at each visit, unless it is considered inappropriate, and an interpreter who is independent of the child's parents and of the private foster carer is used where the child's preferred language is not English.

Where additional support needs are identified above those falling under the private fostering regulations, then consideration will be given to transferring the case to the relevant social work team where further assessment and intervention can be provided.

9. Better outcomes for our children

Being healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health, and living a healthy lifestyle.

We will;

- Ensure the child's health is reviewed at each monitoring visit,
- Ensure the child is registered with a local GP,
- Ensure the child's immunisations are up to date,
- Encourage the child to be taken for six monthly dental checks,
- Encourage the child to visit the optician annually,
- Ensure the carer provides a healthy diet for the child,
- Confirm that contact with the child's birth family/person with parental responsibility remains positive, and
- Encourage the child to become involved in sporting activities.

Staying safe: being protected from harm and neglect.

We will;

- Ensure Private Foster carers and members of the household are assessed and are DBS checked.
- Ensure the statutory visits are completed within timescales (6 weekly in the first year of the arrangement and 12 weekly in the second and subsequent years).
- Ensure the child is seen alone as part of the monitoring visit.
- Ensure the Privately Fostered child is provided with their support worker's name and contact details.
- Ensure that prompt action is taken when it is considered a child is living in an arrangement that puts them at risk.
- Ensure private foster carers are provided with information about relevant training, which can be accessed through the general foster carer training programme.

Enjoying and achieving: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood.

We will;

- Ensure the Private Foster Carer encourages and supports the child with their education
- Encourage children to attend extra-curricular activities and attend targeted opportunities for academic development e.g. revision classes
- Ensure the child's school attendance is regular
- Encourage the Private Foster Carer to attend school open evenings.

Making a positive contribution: being involved with the community and society, and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour.

We will;

- Encourage the child to be involved in the decision making about their future
- Encourage the Private Foster Carer to promote positive relationships in the child's life and support them to participate in community and out-of-school activities
- Ensure the child's support worker regularly gathers the child's wishes and feelings
- Encourage the child to talk about concerns.

Achieving economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

We will;

- Ensure children and young people are encouraged to think about further education and their future.
- Encourage Private Foster Carers to promote the benefits of the child regularly saving money

10. Comments and Complaints

If a comment or complaint about the service is received, it is the responsibility of the Practice Lead of the relevant team to try to resolve any concerns raised by service users.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at this first stage, it may become necessary for the complaint to be formally registered with the:

Corporate Complaints

London Borough of Newham
Newham Dockside
1000 Dockside Road
London E16 2QU.

Telephone: 020 8430 2000

Email: CEX-Corporate.Complaints@newham.gov.uk

A copy of the leaflet setting out how to make a complaint is made available to applicants during their assessment.

If a child or young person makes a complaint about services provided for them, then the Children Act complaints procedure is followed. All children and young people can access an advocate via the Children's Rights Service. The Children's Rights Service will support children and young people in making complaints on their behalf and support them throughout the process of getting a solution.

How to access this service?

- Complete a referral form and send it to childrensrights@newham.gov.uk
- Contact details:
- Landline: 0203 373 1502
- Mobile: 07909906954

Website: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/children-families>

11. Review and inspection

Ofsted are responsible for the inspection of our Private Fostering Service.

The local Ofsted office responsible for inspecting our services is:

Ofsted South Region

Freshford House
Radcliffe Way
Bristol BF1 6NL

Telephone – 08456 404040
Email – enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

12. Our contact details

Newham Private Fostering Service Details:

Fostering and Adoption Service

London Borough of Newham
Newham Dockside
Second Floor, East Wing
1000 Dockside Road
London E16 2QU

Newham Council Telephone No: **020 8430 2000**

Newham MASH Team No: **0203 373 4600**

NEWHAM MASH EMAIL: MASH@newham.gov.uk

REFERRAL TO NEWHAM MASH PORTAL:

www.newham.gov.uk/mash

Nasim Ahmed (Private Fostering Lead)

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Mark Thompson (Fostering Support Team /Private Fostering Team
Practice Lead) Mark.Thompson@newham.gov.uk