Contents

1. Introduction
2. Our Objectives
3. Our Vision for Children and Young People
4. Our Principles and Approach
5. Our Staff
6. The Fostering Panel
7. Our Services
8. Developments within the reporting year
9. Our Performance Statistics
10. Our aims for 2019-2020
11. Independent Review Mechanism
12. Ofsted Inspections
13. Comments and complaints
14. Our contact details.
1. Introduction

This report describes the work of the London Borough of Newham Fostering Service, during the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019. The report will outline
• our objectives
• the services we provide
• how the Service has developed during the reporting period
• our performance statistics
• our key objectives for 2019/2020

In doing so it sets out how the Service meets the requirements of the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, and subsequent related guidance and legislation concerning looked after children and young people.

The Fostering Service is part of the Children and Young People’s Service and its primary role is to recruit, assess, train and support in-house foster carers and Family and Friends/Connected Persons Carers.

2. Our Objectives

The overarching aim of the Fostering Service is to provide a range of high quality, appropriate foster placements that meet or exceed the Fostering National Minimum Standards (NMS). We continually strive to recruit and retain carers who are nurturing, have high aspirations for our looked after children and wish to work with us to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children in their care.

Our primary objectives in support of this aim are to:

a. Ensure the provision of secure, safe and consistent care to all children placed in foster care (NMS 4, 5, 10 & 21).

b. Provide a positive experience of family life and a rich, enjoyable childhood to all children in foster care (NMS 1, 2 & 3).

c. To actively contribute and ensure permanency planning occurs in a timely manner for children and young people. Rehabilitation to birth parents, adoption, special guardianship, connected persons arrangements, long term fostering, independent living, staying put arrangements; step down from residential to foster care.

d. Prioritise the child’s health, education and social development in order to assist them in reaching their full potential.
e. Place importance on recognising and helping children and young people to develop positive identities and high self-esteem by promoting their cultural heritage and traditions, religion and language whilst in foster care.

f. Targeted recruitment and approval of foster carers to ensure that we are better able to meet the needs of our looked after children population.

g. Working together with the child’s social worker and multi-agency partners to develop and embed a continually improving understanding of the children and young people’s needs in a fostering setting. Targeted training is offered to foster carers to address current social challenges such as knife crime, county lines, criminal and sexual exploitation, FGM.

h. To work in partnership with children, young people, parents, foster carers and professionals to ensure the views of our looked after children are captured in consultation with the supervising social worker. Further contributions are acknowledged from both fostering practice leads who attend the Children in Care Council and during the foster carers Annual foster home reviews.

i. Provide appropriate training and supervision to enable foster carers to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care and to assist in their own personal and professional development.

j. Foster carers will continue to benefit from the support of the fostering team family therapist, an embedded clinician with the fostering service who provides training, case consultations and 1:1 Support for the foster carers through their supervising social worker.

3. Our Vision for Children and Young People

Our Vision is set out in the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-2020. The overall outcomes we are seeking for all children and young people in Newham includes the following:

- Promoting Health and Wellbeing
- Learning, Progress and Achievement
- Safety and Stability
- Resilience and Responsibility

To achieve these outcomes we ensure we are doing everything we can across the Council with our partners, to listen and respond to what is important for children and young people,
brining real improvements in the experience of their care and significantly contributing to enhancing their life chances.

4. **Our Principles and Approach –**

- Foster carers will only be recruited where we are satisfied they can provide a high standard of care and loving environment for the foster child.
- We will consult regularly and consider the child’s wishes and feelings when we plan a placement for the child in order to best meet their needs.
- Where it is possible and consistent with the child’s best interests, we will try to place siblings together.
- We will continue to consider a child’s age, gender, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexuality, language, disability and any other characteristics when we are placing the child with foster carers.
- 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.
- We will enable young people reaching eighteen years-of-age to remain living with their foster carer under a ‘Staying Put’ arrangement, if that is both theirs and their foster carers wish.
- We ensure that whenever children and families come into contact with our service they interact with experienced, skilled members of staff and panel members who are capable of understanding their needs and making the right decisions on the child’s behalf.
- Foster carers and social workers will be valued, supported and provided with effective training to enable them to provide safe and effective care.
- We will seek to support both children and carers in a Family and Friends fostering arrangement and give families caring for a young person who is a close friend or relative the best chance to continue caring for the child.
- We value our Family and Friends foster carers and will seek to provide an equal level of support as that we provide for our registered foster carers.
- We will commission services only where we are certain that our partners can provide a high quality and value for money service. We monitor our commissioned services closely to ensure they share our values and principles.
- We will continue to advocate to raise the profile of fostering within Newham’s communities to dispel any myths and misconceptions concerning fostering.
- Our service is monitored against a range of performance indicators and quality standards to ensure consistent and sustained improvement.
5. **Our Staff**

The management team of the Fostering Service, as of 31st March 2019 includes the following:-

Head of Corporate Parenting, Service Manager Placements and three Practice Leads.

One Practice Lead covers Carer Recruitment, the staff in that team are responsible for the recruitment and assessment of prospective Foster Carers and Adopters.

The other two Practice Leads are responsible for the Supervision and Support of foster carers. The Support & Supervision Team consists of 10 Supervising Social Workers.

The service is supported by the Business Support Team which includes 1 Panel Administrator.

6. **The Fostering Panel**

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering (Standard 14) states: *The fostering panel and decision maker make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations/decisions in line with the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care.*

The Panel also has a quality assurance role and gives advice about permanency planning and highlights concerns regarding drift and delay. Outstanding actions from previous fostering panel as well as exemptions are presented at the business section of each panel.

Foster carers and prospective foster carers are given the opportunity to attend and to contribute at all panel meetings during which their approval/re-approval/matching is being discussed.

**Membership of Panel**

Recruitment of new members is either through advertising in the local media, website and intranet, through Consortium members or internal council processes. Applicants are interviewed by the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor. When a candidate is applying to become an independent panel member, one other panel member is involved in the interview process in addition to the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor. Recommendations on appointments are presented to the Agency Decision Maker for final approval. Once approved, the new member becomes part of the central list of members. There is no limit on the number of people who may be included on the central list.
The number, skills, knowledge and experience of persons on the central list continue to be sufficient to enable the fostering service to constitute panels that are equipped to make competent recommendations to the fostering service provider, taking into account the needs of the children and carers that the service provides for.

**Panel Members Appraisals**

There is a statutory requirement for an Annual Review of each panel member’s performance as set out in the Adoption & Children Act 2002. These are conducted by the Agency Panel Advisor and the Panel Chair.

Appraisals for panel members are completed on an annual basis. The fostering panel chair provides feedback to the panel on the general outcomes from the appraisals. The Chair’s annual appraisal is conducted by the Panel Advisor (Service Manager, Placements) and the Agency Decision Maker.

From the year’s appraisals, Panel Members were able to pass on comments about the panel meetings and processes as well as hear feedback about their own individual contributions. Panel members found this helpful and were able to contribute to the development of their own and the panel’s development.

7. **Our Services**

Newham Fostering Service provides the following:

a. **Recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers.**

The Carer Recruitment Team implements a Recruitment and Retention Strategy that is updated annually in line with the needs and profiles of Newham looked after children. The strategy recognises the need to recruit foster carers from within an targeted catchment area, in order to meet the needs of the children requiring foster placements.

Prospective foster carers will approach the service as a result of general advertising, website pages, recruitment events, or personal recommendation.

Thirteen recruitment events took place throughout the reporting year and included recruitment stands at local supermarkets, hospitals, the Job Fair at Barking College, coffee mornings at libraries and the town hall, Green Street Festival, Super Saturday of Sport Fun Day and a number of other corporate events such as the Newham Show.

During April 2018 to March 2019 the service received a total of 276 phone calls and internet enquires. This figure includes those who only wanted an information booklet sent to them and those who wanted to become foster carers. 33 initial home visits were undertaken during the reporting year. By the end of the reporting year 6 foster carers were approved.
households withdrew during their Stage 2 assessment and 1 household was counselled out by the Service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Enquires</th>
<th>Total Number of Initial visits</th>
<th>Foster Carer Approvals</th>
<th>Foster Carers withdrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>276</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 plus 1 counselled out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explanation of low numbers converted to approved foster carers:

Many enquiries do not proceed beyond the telephone interview or initial home visit due to:

- English not as a first language – many potential applicants struggle to communicate in English.

- Childcare – a large number of enquiries are received from households where there are already 3 or 4 young dependent children living in the family home.

- Accommodation suitability – many enquiries are received from potential applicants without a spare bed room for the foster child.

- Unsuitable Housing – many homes when visited are found to be non compliant with Standard 10.2 of The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011) (they are often in a state of disrepair, damp, mould, cold etc.). The majority of these homes are privately rented.

- Historical or current involvement with the department in relation to safeguarding, domestic abuse or other concerns.

The Carer Recruitment Team is also responsible for the full assessment of Family and Friends foster carers following on from interim approval. Family and Friends foster carers (referred to in legislation as ‘connected persons’ foster carers) are approved to care for a specific child or sibling group, who they are related to or who are a close family friend. These placements often start during care proceedings with many of these arrangements becoming permanent through Child Arrangement Orders, Special Guardianship or Adoption Orders.
The assessment and approval process is as follows:

1. **Complete online fostering enquiry form** or call 0800 0130393
   - Information Only: Information Pack Sent
   - Those wishing to proceed: Telephone interview undertaken.

2. **Initial Visit**
   - A social worker makes a visit to your home for a fuller discussion/assessment.
   - Prospective carers are informed of outcome within 10 working days.

3. **Positive Recommendation:** Applicants invited to training
4. **Negative Recommendation:** Applicants informed in writing

5. **3 Day Skills to Foster Training at Newham Dockside**
   - Positive Recommendation: Prospective carer invited to apply or informed as appropriate.

6. **Form F Assessment**
   - Stage 1 & Stage 2 are run concurrently.
   - Form F assessment starts & Statutory Checks undertaken.

7. **Majority of Assessments Completed within 4 months.**
   - Newham uses an external agency to complete these assessments.

8. **Form F Completed:** Quality Assured by Service Assessor and Applicant attends Fostering Panel

9. **Final Stage**
   - Agency Decision Maker confirms whether you can be approved as a foster carer.
b. Support and supervision of Foster Carers

Once a foster carer has been approved by our panel, they will be allocated a supervising social worker from whom they will receive regular supervision and support. If a foster carer needs advice out of normal office hours, they can contact the Out of Hours Duty Team, who is on-call from 5.15pm until 9.00am from Monday to Friday and throughout the weekend and bank holidays.

All carers are invited to attend the monthly support groups which alternate between being held in during the day and the evening.

Any carer currently looking after a connected child may be assessed to be a Family and Friends foster carer whilst the child is still living with them. This is called an “interim arrangement” and must be recommended by the child’s social worker following an initial viability assessment. A full assessment of the child’s current carers will be needed for us to authorise the child to remain in this placement, which is then presented to the Fostering Panel.

A one-off set up grant of £750.00 is given to all new carers to provide furniture, bedding and other necessities for their future placements. Foster carers will receive a weekly allowance to cover the costs of caring for the child in placement and a weekly fee for themselves. The foster carer’s weekly fee increases with the foster carer’s development.

All carers are subject to an Annual Foster Home Review (AFHR) that looks at their fostering experience over the previous year including training attended and support provided. Views are sought from the supervising social worker, the foster carer, foster children, birth children, and placing social workers. Following the review the agency decision maker will consider whether it is necessary to continue with, change or terminate the carers’ approval.

Every approved foster carer is reviewed at the first anniversary after their approval date and thereafter annually. The first and three yearly reviews are presented to the fostering panel for deliberation and recommendation, whilst the second review is not necessarily presented to the panel unless there are concerns about the carer’s suitability or the quality or standard of care being provided. Otherwise such reviews are presented directly to the Deputy Director, Children and Young People’s Service, who is the Agency Decision Maker, for re-approval.

c. Staying Put

All young people who are looked after and reaching 18 years of age will have the opportunity to remain with their current foster carer. This will be considered as a ‘Staying Put’ arrangement.
The young person may request to Stay Put because they:

- wish to continue their education
- feel too vulnerable to leave their foster placement at this stage
- are waiting for suitable housing
- feel settled and it’s their personal preference to remain with their foster carer.

The foster carer will need to be in agreement with the proposed Staying Put arrangement at least one year prior to the young person reaching their 18th birthday.

There have been 17 Staying Put arrangements with in-house foster carers during this past year. There are 43 Staying Put arrangements in total IFAS.

d. **Training for approved foster carers.**

All approved foster carers are expected to undertake a range of training to update and develop their skills. The national standards developed by the Children’s Workforce Development Council (Training, Support & Development Standards) provide a framework for training for the first twelve to eighteen months of a foster carer’s (including Family and Friends) service. The seven Standards cover the main areas of the foster carer role and set out what foster carers should know, understand and be able to do:

- **Standard 1:** understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people
- **Standard 2:** understand your role as a Foster Carer
- **Standard 3:** understand health and safety and healthy caring
- **Standard 4:** know how to communicate effectively
- **Standard 5:** understand the development of children and young people
- **Standard 6:** safeguard children and young people (keep them safe from harm)
- **Standard 7:** develop yourself.

Experienced and newly approved foster carers are also encouraged to attend the Fostering Changes programme. This programme provides practical advice and training for foster carers in order to develop their skills in managing difficult and challenging child behaviour and forming positive relationships with the children they are caring for.

Foster carers can also access a comprehensive range of training on-line. The e-learning courses include but not limited to:

- Safeguarding and child protection
- Child development
• Attachment
• Grieve and bereavement
• Mental health
• Complex trauma
• Child development
• Working with children with disabilities
• Anti-bullying
• Contact and birth families
• Positive identity and self esteem
• Managing challenging behaviour
• Life story work
• Play therapy
• Health and nutrition
• Equality and diversity

e. Fostering United Newham

Fostering United Newham is the independent foster carers support group, run by, and available to all Newham in-house carers. Fostering United currently has 120 members. Committee members and Fostering leads meet at quarterly on an annual basis to discuss issues, ideas and challenges specific to the fostering role.

All new foster carers routinely receive membership of Fostering United Newham. The group are regularly consulted on service development and are allocated their own budget to fund events throughout the year.

The Service also registers all foster carers, including Family and Friends foster carers, for membership of Fostering Network. Fostering Network is an independent, non-profit organisation providing high quality professional support to foster carers in England.

f. Information for Family and Friends/Connected Carers

If you would like more information about the range of options available for looking after a child whom you already know or are related to, you can find information about the various arrangements and what they mean for carers and children by contacting the practice leads, Fostering – email: SSD-fosteringsupport@newham.gov.uk

8. Developments within the reporting year

As of the end of March 2019 we had **122** approved fostering households, offering a total of **218** places. The number of approved carers has remained the same from the position last year.
We are proud that we have carers who have provided a service to us for over 39 years and we have taken the opportunity to thank and congratulate many of our carers at our annual foster carers celebration on 7th June 2019. Eleven carers received outstanding achievement awards for the following categories: Health and Wellbeing, Learning and Achievement, Safety and Stability, Resilience and Responsibility.

The Carer Recruitment Team continues to work closely with the Communications Team in seeking to recruit foster carers from the agreed catchment area with campaigns regularly featuring in the Newham Mag and the local press. We continue to regularly ask our existing foster carers whether they have any family members or friends who would consider fostering with an incentive of £500 if the person they have recommended goes on to be approved and receive their first placement. Thirty two of our fostering enquiries throughout the reporting year were from word of mouth.

The fostering website is updated regularly to ensure that information is current and clearly advertises the incentives of fostering for Newham. Sixty one of our fostering enquiries during the year were directly from the website.

During the reporting year 13 households attended the Skills to Foster training which is run in-house by the Carer Recruitment Team with support from existing foster carers and supervising social workers. It has been encouraging to see that the groups have reflected the diversity within Newham with applicants representing different ethnicities, religions, and professional backgrounds. Of note, out of the 13 households, 4 of these were single applicants and 4 were family and friends carers.

There were a number of applicants that did not progress to the next stage of the assessment for a number of different reasons. Where this has been the case we have sought to identify patterns emerging and have worked hard to address these to ensure that suitable applicants are encouraged and supported to progress. For example, previously we noted that a number of applicants withdrew after the first day of the Skills to Foster training and so changes have been made to programme to emphasise the positive elements of fostering and not just the responsibilities involved.

Other reasons for applicants not being progressed to next stage of the assessment has included the level of spoken English demonstrated by the applicants and their general physical health. Where appropriate, applicants have been invited in to have a discussion with the Carer Recruitment Practice Lead where a final decision is made about whether or not to proceed.

Having successfully completed training, prospective applicants are encouraged to return their Registration of Interest application forms. There have a been a number of applicants (5 households) who have then made the decision not to apply for their own reasons or have asked to be placed on hold. For example, in one case, the applicant went on to become a
A kinship carer for two children in her network and has since come back to us. In all cases efforts have been made to encourage applicants but in doing so it is recognised that the decision to become a foster carer is not one that should be taken lightly and applicants often need to seriously consider the implications of fostering, particularly for single applicants.

Newham undertake thorough assessments to ensure that the foster carers approved meet the standards required. This has meant that a few assessments during the reporting year have been required to stop due to concerns or issues emerging at this stage. We continue to highlight any areas that we are aware of prior to the assessment progressing in order that these can be addressed within the first few sessions with the independent assessing social worker. During the reporting year, 2 fostering assessments were stopped during assessment.

It is particularly notable we have also had a number of foster carers from other agencies applying to transfer to Newham which may be indicative of our good reputation and effective incentives. However, these have not been without their own complications and have not always been successful; either due to them not meeting the standards that Newham require or being offered placements by their current agencies during the assessment period.

During the reporting year, 6 fostering households were approved. 2 task-centred carers (and 1 connected persons carer) were deregistered because they were not able to provide the standard of care required due to a combination of reasons. During the reporting year, 10 carers (and 1 connected person carer) resigned as Newham foster carers, primarily due to feeling unable to manage competing work and family demands.

Of the 6 households approved, 4 were connected persons.

Other Stage 2 assessment activity - 2 households withdrew – Reasons - agency carer who decided to remain with their agency after taking a placement which was likely to be long-term, work pressures. 1 household was counselled out due to concerns about lack of openness about information on their DBS check.

During this reporting year, 14 foster carers had their approval terminated due to resignation, de-registration and retirement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons Why Carers have Resigned/Deregistered</th>
<th>Total Number of Carers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carers resigned due to personal circumstances i.e. bereavement, issues with own children, etc.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carers resign due to change of career i.e. full time studies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer moved out of London</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer resigned due to offering staying put placement to disabled</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
young person

Carers applied for SGO in respect of their foster children (one successfully completed and one in assessment) 2
Carer retired 1
Carer was de-registered due to standard of care issues 1
Carer resigned following standard of care investigation 1
Connected person carers resigned as their young people moved to semi-independent living. 2

The fostering service provides a wide range of resources including emergency, respite, short term and long term placements for Looked After Children and Young People. Many foster carer can offer more than one type of placement, which increases the flexibility within the service.

Please see table below for the number of Looked After Children in Newham during the last year and breakdown between placements with in-house foster carers and independent fostering agencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period*</th>
<th>Total Children in in-house Foster Care</th>
<th>Total Children in IFA Foster Care</th>
<th>Total Children Looked After at end of month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 18</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 18</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 18</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 18</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 18</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 18</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 18</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 18</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 19</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 19</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*these numbers relate to the run of data which would have usually been around the 15th of the subsequent month to the period end date shown.

The above data highlights that there is a steady decrease in the number of looked after children since April 2018 to March 2019.

These numbers exclude children/young people placed in hostels, independent living or residential schools, residential homes and secure units/prisons.

There has been a consistent and increased demand for foster placements for the following children and young people: siblings, teenagers, children with complex needs, parent and child placements. Due to the increase in demand we have had to go to independent fostering agencies to provide placements.
9. **Our performance statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Statistics for 2018/2019</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of foster carers recruited</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of foster carers de-registered (including resignations)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of fostering assessment completed with timescales (8 months</td>
<td>Approximately 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from receipt of Registration of Interest).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of referrals to LADO</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children placed with in-house foster carers at 31.03.19 including Connected Persons.</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children placed in long-term foster placements (matched)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of bed spaces</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed spaces excluding those not available</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy rate against all bed spaces</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy rate (using bed spaces exclude those not available in denominator)</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were no formal complaints during this reporting year.

There were two allegations made by children in care which did not result in children needing to be removed from their placements.

10. **Key Objectives for 2019-2020**

We have recruited six foster carers in the reporting year 2018-2019. This was a decrease from the previous year. We are therefore continuing to make efforts to move in the right direction in supporting more children with our in-house carer in comparison to IFA’s carers.

Moving forward our aim is to continue to work strategically with the Communications team to ensure that our advertising is targeted and effective. Due to the issues around the poor housing stock in Newham we are now looking to recruit outside of Newham, from neighbouring Local Authorities. That said, our aim is recruit in-house foster carers who are able to support children to remain in their current schools and enable them to continue to have direct contact with birth families. Recruiting in-house foster carers will not only reduce our reliance on IFAs but will also enable us to have oversight of the standard of care that children are receiving and aid communication between social work teams. Particular attention will be given to recruiting foster carers who are willing and able to care for children and young people that tend to be harder to place, such as teenagers, sibling groups and children with disabilities.

Our objective in 2019-2020, is to recruit 12 new fostering households. Given the challenges, this is an ambitious target however, we believe that the incentives that we are currently
reviewing will identify Newham out as an attractive Local Authority to foster with. We are currently offering a £500 incentive to all current Newham staff and in-house foster carers if they recommend a friend to foster who is subsequently approved and accepts their first placement. A £500 incentive is also being offered to foster carers who transfer from IFAs and other local authorities, once they are approved and receive their first placement.

Other benefits include:

- A one off set up grant of £750 for newly approved foster carers to equip their home in readiness for a child.
- A weekly allowance Up to £450 per week, for each child.
- Additional allowances to cover birthdays, festivals, holidays etc.
- Priority given to in-house carers for placements instead of placements with agency carers.
- Careful matching with the child/children who foster carers will be caring for.
- Newly approved foster carers to receive buddy support from an experienced foster carer.
- Supervising Social worker who visits regularly to support foster carers in their role.
- Support from an in-house Family Therapist
- Out of hours’ service (through Emergency Duty Team).
- Support from Newham Foster Carer’s Association.
- Monthly Foster Care Support Group.
- Mentoring support from an experience foster carer (buddy scheme).
- Comprehensive training and bespoke personal development programme.
- Free membership of Fostering Network.
- Free tickets for events at the Olympic Stadium and Stratford Theatre.
- Annual Celebration Awards Event for foster carers.
We are looking at the following developments in 2019-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The key changes we are proposing relate primarily to the fees paid as allowances to the foster carers and offer benefits including concessions and incentives. We are not proposing an increase to the child’s allowance element of the payments to carers.</td>
<td>Review the recruitment strategy and offer a combination of incentive and support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The recommendations are essential towards maintaining our competitiveness within the Fostering Consortium and neighbouring Boroughs. The recommendations highlighted will also support the recruitment of additional in-house foster carers in order to keep up with the demand for foster placements whilst also mitigating against the potential for losing current carers to other agencies and local authority fostering services. | Foster carers allowance to increase by at least 10%.  
Holiday retainer to be introduced.  
Incentives of fostering for Newham to be clearly featured in Recruitment campaigns |
| Review recruitment strategies and undertake targeted intense recruitment campaigns. | To review our branding and marketing and upgrade the website using the services of an expert in this area to bring our site on a par with those of the IFA agencies and neighbouring boroughs.  
Liaise closely with the department’s Communications team to organise strategic and targeted advertising. Adverts to be placed in Stratford, Liverpool Street, Greenwich, Waltham Forest to target commuters and areas of suitable housing stock. |
<p>| Monitor applicants at every stage.                                   | All enquiries will continue to be monitored from Initial Contact through to Initial Visits, Skills to Foster Training and Assessment. This will enable interested carers to be engaged at the earliest stage. |
| Provide an out of hours telephone support service to foster carers in addition to the current out of hours emergency contact duty team. | The fostering service are establishing an out of hour support during evenings and weekends |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continue to further develop mechanisms to hear the views of children and young people in the care system, carers and birth parents in a range of formats so that these views can influence the service going forward.</th>
<th>Fostering Practice Leads to regularly attend Child in Care Council meetings throughout the year. All feedback from children and young people to be collated and reviewed by managers and themes/issues to be included in the Annual report by the Chair of the fostering panel. The themes will produce actions that will be implemented by the team within supervising visits/specific training etc. Feedback will also inform guidance practice to ensure foster carers/placements are meeting the needs of looked after children.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The membership, tasks and culture of the fostering panel to be reviewed. Consideration to be given as to whether panels are the best way to ensure independent scrutiny of approvals and placements.</td>
<td>Review membership of the fostering and adoption panels to ensure diversity and experience. Panel membership to include more male members and previously looked after children. Review of the panel process to also include matching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the number of children that are long term matched.</td>
<td>To focus on matching children in a timely manner by establishing more panels.</td>
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</tbody>
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