



Fostering Statement of Purpose 2015-2016

INTRODUCTION AND LEGAL CONTEXT

Brent Council Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000 (CSA) for the conduct of Fostering Services. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Fostering Services Regulations govern the work of fostering services throughout England and are used in inspecting and registering fostering agencies.

Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3 (1) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 require a fostering service to produce a statement which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 16. It is intended as a useful source of information for Foster Carers, Fostering Social Workers, Childcare Social Workers and young people. The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose should be child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children.

THE PRINCIPLE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

Brent is committed to the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of each child. The Fostering Service is committed to provide a range of safe and secure foster placements to help children to develop and enjoy stable relationships with significant adults who can best meet their needs including their religious, ethnic and cultural needs.

The Fostering Service is committed to provide a range of safe and secure foster placements to meet the assessed needs of children in care and promote and safeguard their welfare. The Service aims to provide placements that promote stability and positive outcomes for children and young people by working in partnership with young people, carers, birth families, other professionals and the community.

Our adoption function is positioned within the Placements' Service of Children and Young People's Services. The vision for the Placements' service as set out in our service plan is that:

- The best foster carers are recruited for our children.
- All placements receive high quality support, effectively targeted according to need.
- Children are found permanent families without delay – whether within their extended family network or outside.
- The number of children placed closer to home with our in-house foster carers increases.
- Staff within the service are encouraged to become more professionally autonomous and confident.

The Statement of Purpose is underpinned by the Brent Borough Plan (2015-18); The Children and Young People Departmental Plan (2015-6); The workforce development strategy (2015-18); the Brent Sufficiency Strategy (2015-17) and the Placements' Service Plan (2015-6).

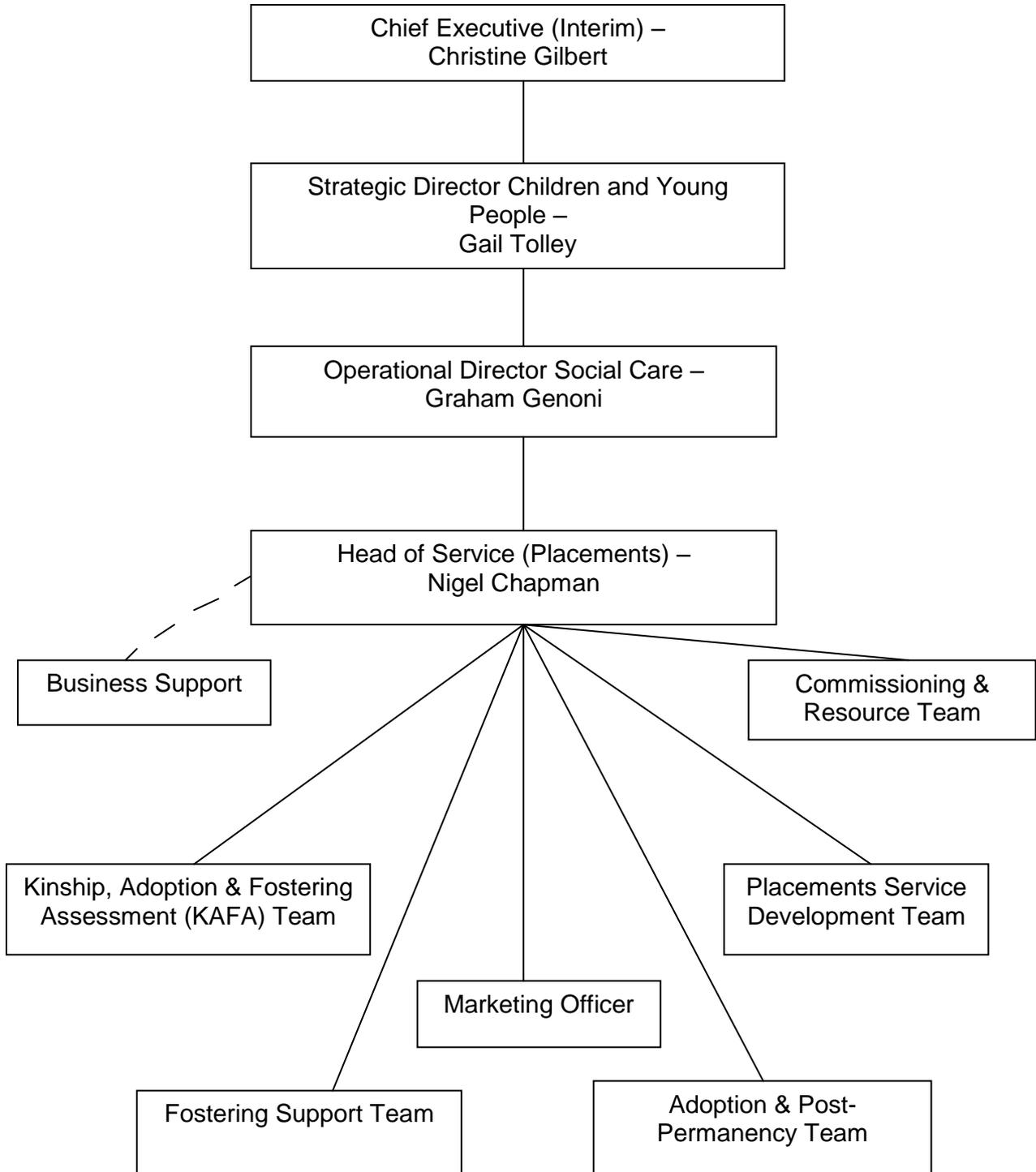
In carrying out its responsibilities, the Service aims:

- To ensure the views of children, parents and carers are sought and are taken into account, having regard for their age and understanding, in the continuous development and improvement of the service;
- To recognise the importance of and support appropriate levels of contact with family and community as is consistent with their welfare and care plan;
- To recognise and value the diverse nature of the community it serves and proactively engage with the local community to identify potential carers;
- To ensure there is a sufficient range of safe and appropriate placements available for the Looked After Children in Brent;
- To actively monitor and supervise all placements to ensure children are safe, their needs are met and they are making progress to achieve positive outcomes;

- To contribute to and ensure effective multi-disciplinary and partnership working to meet the health, educational and social needs of children within placements; The service operates within the framework of equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. Children will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, age, gender, sexuality, disability or social class in terms of service provision. Wherever possible children are matched within their own cultural, racial, linguistic and religious communities, and where this is not possible, plans must be put in place to keep the child's culture alive for them;
- Children with disabilities are to be placed in an environment that recognises and caters for their disability, and at the same time promotes their social inclusion;
- To ensure staff and carers are well trained and competent in delivering a quality Fostering Service, including opportunities for continued learning and professional development. To ensure all staff and carers have completed safeguarding checks and have a valid DBS;
- To provide all staff and carers support and supervision with clear lines of accountability and management;
- To provide each Foster Carer a named allocated Supervising Social Worker;
- To work in collaboration with and provide advice on Fostering issues to other colleagues in the Brent Children and Families Directorate;
- To operate clear administrative records and financial management systems pertinent to the running of the service, including the maintenance of comprehensive and up-to-date records on all children placed;
- To ensure all complaints and allegations against carers/staff are investigated under departmental procedures in a timely fashion and lessons learned filter to improvements in future practice;
- The Fostering Service operates a Fostering Panel that provides a quality assurance role with regards to the recruitment and review of Foster Carers, Family and Friends Foster Carers and foster placements. The panel will ensure the welfare and safety of children is paramount in all decision making.

THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

The Fostering Service is part of Brent's Children and Families Department within the Social Care Division. The structure of the service and how it relates to the organisation is shown below.



Staffing and Qualifications

The Registered Provider of the Fostering Service is the London Borough of Brent.

Graham Genoni, Operational Director Social Care, is the Agency Decision Maker.

Nigel Chapman, Head of Service (Placements), is the Registered Manager of the Fostering Service.

Kelli Eboji is the Team Manager of the Kinship, Adoption & Fostering Assessment (KAFA) Team. This team comprises:

2 x Deputy Team Manager

12 x Social Workers

1 x Social Work Assistant

1 x Recruitment Co-ordinator

Cecilia Gabriel is the Team Manager of the Fostering Support Team. This team comprises:

1 x Deputy Team Manager

10 x Social Workers

Róisín Hegarty is Brent's Agency Advisor and the Team Manager of the Placements Service Development Team. This team comprises:

1 x Fostering Reviewing Officer

1 x Fostering Development Coordinator

1 x Play Therapist

The managers within the service are all qualified Social Workers, registered by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), with extensive experience (a minimum of 2 years post-qualifying practice) in children and families social work.

All assessing and supervising social work staff within the teams are similarly professionally qualified and experienced and registered with the HCPC.

Any social work assistants are supervised by qualified Social Workers.

OUR SERVICE TO CHILDREN

The primary purpose of the Fostering Service is to provide high quality, safe, secure and caring foster families for children who are unable to live with their parents. Whenever possible and where it is safe to do so, children will be placed with someone in their extended family or a close family friend. These arrangements are recognised in legislation as 'Family and Friend' foster placements. Where this is not possible, placements will be found with one of our approved Foster Carers or a suitable Foster Carer approved by an independent fostering agency. We aim to clearly identify the particular emotional, physical, cultural and religious needs of a child and find a foster family who can best meet those needs.

Except in emergencies, we plan introduction meetings between the child and the Foster Carers in an effort to lessen the anxiety for the child of moving to a new family. Where a child is placed in an emergency the Child's Social Worker or the Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker will give the child as much information about the Foster Carers and their household as possible.

Children will be seen in placement by both their own Social Worker and the Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker. Children will be encouraged to express their wishes and views about their foster placement and they will be invited to contribute in writing to their Foster Carer's Annual Review. The children of Foster Carers also contribute to their parents' Foster Carer's Annual Review.

PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN

The Brent Commissioning and Resource Team identify Foster Carers who have vacancies and work with the Fostering Support Team to assess if this is a potentially appropriate placement for the child. If they agree, the match is proposed to the Foster Carer/s and the Child's Social Worker who will further consider the match, involving the child as appropriate, and make the arrangements for placement if agreed.

CHILDREN'S GUIDE

There are a number of Children's Guides devised for children accessing Brent's fostering service. Their aim is to provide information about what it means to be fostered, what Social Workers do and what children can do if they are not happy in their foster home or if they have any worries or concerns.

There is one Children's Guide aimed at children aged 5 to 10 years, one for children over 11 years and one for children placed with Family and Friends Foster Carers. All children within those age ranges placed with Foster Carers are provided with the relevant copy of the Children's Guide. The Guides are available in different formats as required. The Guides are reviewed annually and a copy is sent to Ofsted and all of the service's foster carers.

Younger children are introduced to the concept of fostering by their Social Worker via direct work (play) techniques to aid their understanding.

HOW BRENT FOSTERING SERVICE OPERATES

The Kinship, Adoption & Fostering Assessment (KAFA) Team

The KAFA Team is the team responsible for recruiting foster carers for the London Borough of Brent Placements Service. They also assess all Connected Person(s) and Family and Friends Foster Carers and placements. This team is responsible for all Special Guardianship assessments whether they are directed as part of public care proceedings or private applications. Special Guardianship assessments need to be completed within three months of formal notification that an assessment is required. The KAFA Team works collaboratively with other social work teams within the department and professionals involved in a child's network.

Brent has a widely diverse community; recruitment activity and assessment processes respond positively to the diversity and differences in child rearing practices, family values and attitudes in order to recruit from a wide pool of carers across the different spectrums of racial, cultural, religious and social classes living in Brent. The team has a rolling programme of recruitment activity, managed by a Marketing Officer, including on-going publicity, special marketing campaigns and special events during national fostering week as well as word of mouth from other approved Foster Carers.

All applicants are assessed, trained and prepared to care for children who become looked after in Brent. Foster Carers are approved to care for children as either short term or long term carers. Any specialist skills they may have, for example in caring for particularly challenging children, or children with a disability, are considered at the matching stage.

The KAFA Team takes a lead role in ensuring that Brent is able to fulfil its statutory duty in relation to Private Fostering arrangements, under the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. Private Fostering assessments and visits are completed by a Social Worker, in accordance with the requirements as outlined in the Private Fostering procedures.

The team operates a duty system, from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, to ensure that any potential applicant is able to have an immediate response to their enquiry and to answer any general queries they may have. The team has a dedicated Recruitment Coordinator, who is the first point of contact and takes all referrals and process enquiries from members of the public interested in becoming a Brent Foster Carer.

Structure of the team

1 x Team Manager
2 x Deputy Team Managers
12 x Social Workers

1 x Recruitment Co-ordinator
1 x Marketing Officer

Fostering Support Team

The main remit of the Fostering Support Team is to supervise, review, train and support all placements made with Brent approved Foster Carers.

The team works closely with Brent's Commissioning and Resource Team, Children Looked After (Care Planning) Teams and Locality Teams in identifying appropriate placements for Brent's looked after children. The team also works and consults with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service for on-going support and issues in respect of placements. All Foster Carers are allocated a Supervising Social Worker. In the same way that short term and long term Foster Carers are supported, all Kinship Foster Carers are allocated a Supervising Social Worker, the role of whom is to monitor the placement and offer carers support, advice and guidance.

Family and Friends and Connected Person(s) Foster Carers are encouraged to attend the training courses available for all Brent Foster Carers. Kinship Carers (including Special Guardians and Child Arrangement/Residence Order carers) are encouraged to utilise the specific Kinship training offered by the North West London Consortium. There is also an established Kinship Support Group in Brent, which is open to all Kinship Foster Carers, Special Guardians and Residence Order/Child Arrangement Order carers.

Structure of the Team

1 x Team Manager
1 x Deputy Team Manager
10 x Social Workers

Placements Service Development Team

This team provides a robust quality assurance of all aspects of the fostering service with the aim of improving standards of practice and, ultimately, outcomes for looked after children in Brent.

The Team Manager, Róisín Hegarty, is the Agency Advisor for Brent and quality assures all paperwork regarding foster carers' approvals, reviews and terminations, and children's permanence plans. It is her role to advise the Fostering Panel to ensure it is fully compliant with all current legislation and statutory guidance and that all panel members are provided with annual training with the fostering social work teams and kept up to date with current research in the field.

The Fostering Reviewing Officer, Sonia Thompson, chairs the annual reviews of all Brent's Foster Carers and Family and Friends Foster Carers. The aim of these meetings is to acknowledge strengths, highlight areas of development, challenge decisions and make recommendations to the fostering service for enhancing service delivery. Whilst Sonia is a member of the Placements

Service, she has no direct line management for cases or staff and can therefore maintain a level of independence in her quality assurance.

The Fostering Development Co-ordinator, Zak Darwood, manages the training and development of Brent's in-house Foster Carers, Family and Friends Foster Carers and Fostering Panel members, using the views of fostered children and their carers to inform the training programme.

The Play Therapist, Karen Jesnick, offers Play Therapy to Brent's looked after children, as well as consultations to their families, Foster Carers, Kinship and Family and Friends Foster Carers with the aim of supporting the carers to maintain stability for the child/ren in their care and allow the child/ren to make sense of the difficulties in their life.

Structure of the Team

- 1 x Team Manager
- 1 x Fostering Reviewing Officer
- 1 x Fostering Development Coordinator
- 1 x Play therapist

Commissioning & Resource Team

The Commissioning & Resource Team respond to referrals from Social Workers and Managers in the Localities, Care Planning and Transition teams for finding placements for children and young people aged 0-18, quality assuring all potential matches before suggesting appropriate carers for these children. A Social Worker and Social Work Assistant sit within the team to undertake family finding for all children and young people with long-term permanency plans.

The Commissioning & Resource Team also finds placements for children and young people in residential units, semi-accommodation services for 16 plus children or with Independent Fostering Services carers (if a suitable Brent alternative cannot be identified). The team undertake a quality assurance role in relation to these residential units, semi-independent units and Independent Fostering Services carers, including evaluation forms and monitoring visits to these providers.

Financial contracts for Brent Foster Carers, residential units, semi-independent units and Independent Fostering Services are also managed by the Commissioning & Resource Team.

Structure of the Team

- 1 x Deputy Team Manager
- 1 x Senior Access to Resources Officer
- 1 x Access to Resources Officer
- 1 x Family Finding Social Worker
- 1 x Family Finding Social Work Assistant
- 1 x Senior Contracts Officer

2 x Contracts Officers

SUPPORTING SERVICES

The Fostering Service operates a duty system during office hours (9am – 5pm) Monday to Friday, providing advice and support to Foster and Carers and Family and Friends Foster Carers when their allocated Supervising Social Workers are unavailable.

The Brent Emergency Duty Team provides advice and support to looked after children and Foster Carers where there is a situation that requires an immediate response out of normal office hours (5pm – 9am). The Emergency Duty Team also deals with emergency admissions of children to care.

The work of the Fostering Service is well supported by a wide range of internal services such as Brent Legal Services, Virtual School, Finance and Human Resources as well as external services such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and LAC Health provision. Dedicated CAMHS professionals are physically located with the Placement Service to provide timely support to Foster Carers, Family and Friends Foster Carers and Kinship Carers when required. The Play Therapist located within the Placements Service Development Team offers support to the children living with these carers.

THE FOSTERING PANEL

The Fostering Service has a Fostering Panel constituted in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The service maintains a 'central list' of Panel members. The Panel Chair and Vice Chair are independent people with professional experience of fostering. Other panel members on the central list include a Social Worker with more than three years relevant post-qualifying experience, a Brent Councillor, independent members and the agency medical advisor. The Panel meets on the first Friday of every month. Detailed minutes are kept of all Panel meetings.

The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:

- Each application and recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a Foster Carer, Connected Person(s) (Family and Friends Foster Carer) and the terms of their approval
- The first annual review of each approved carer and any other review as requested by the fostering service
- The termination of approval or change of terms of approval of a Foster Carer.

New applicants and existing Foster Carers are invited and encouraged to attend Panel when their application or review is presented to Panel.

The Panel has a quality assurance role and monitors the standard of reports presented to it and feeds back any issues or concerns to the Registered Manager. The Panel makes recommendations to the Fostering Service and these recommendations are referred to the 'Agency Decision Maker' for a decision.

If the Panel or the Agency Decision Maker is minded not to recommend approval or recommends termination of approval, applicants are advised that they can request that their case is reconsidered by the Panel or apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for a review of their case.

CAPACITY AND DEMAND

The Fostering Service responds to planned and unplanned admissions. The structure of the Service recognises that unplanned admissions will occur and seeks to proactively address this need. Carers are specifically recruited and approved on the basis of the service they will provide. During the assessment process and final approval, consideration is given to the impact placements will have and the capabilities/skills of carers. Thus emergency and unplanned admissions are directed towards carers with appropriate skills and capabilities. Where the Fostering Service is unable to meet the placement needs of a child, the commissioning of placements from independent fostering agencies is managed and monitored by the Commissioning and Resource Team.

THE FOSTER CARER CHARTER

Brent Foster Carer Charter - “Children are at the heart of our work”

Brent Placements’ service is committed to providing and promoting safe, stable and nurturing placements where the outcomes and life chances are positive for looked after children. In order to achieve this it is important to have a working relationship which is based on trust and respect among all children services that are involved in the care of the child.

The Service has worked in partnership with Foster Carers to achieve the charter, which was launched in 2012. The charter explains what the roles and responsibilities of the Service and the Carers towards each other and the children we care for.

COMPLAINTS

All local authorities are required to ensure a complaints’ process is provided under the Children Act 1989.

All complaints and queries will be dealt with in a manner that meets Brent local and National requirements. Children, their birth family and Foster Carers are all given a copy of Brent Council’s complaint leaflet.

Children are made aware of the complaints procedure, children’s rights services and of their right to make representations and complaints. This information is contained in the Children’s Guide.

Birth families and carers will be advised of the complaints procedure and their right to make representations and complaints.

FOSTER CARERS' HANDBOOK

All approved Foster Carers are provided with a Foster Carer Handbook, which contains all the policies and procedures relating to Foster Carers, as well as useful information about child care issues and resources.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring

A report is written for the Corporate Parenting Committee on a quarterly basis by the Head of Service, Placements, providing the executive of the council with statistical data in relation to the agency's activity.

Other monitoring includes staff supervision linked to the appraisal system, monthly recorded visits to Foster Carers, Annual Reviews, the Fostering Panel and feedback from training sessions and case recording and practice audits. The Team Managers' monitor data about incidents of concern in foster care, including: restraint; allegations; complaints; unauthorised absence. The Registered Manager monitors the Schedule 6 and 7 requirements of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

Evaluating the Service

The information gathered through quarterly and annual reports, audit, inspections and customer feedback is constantly evaluated by the managers of the Fostering service, to judge its on-going effectiveness and make changes where necessary.

The Fostering Service is also subject to formal inspection by Ofsted and inspections usually take place every three years.

FAIRNESS AND DIVERSITY

The Fostering Service works within Brent's Equalities' framework. The key aims are to ensure:

- Employees and service users alike are treated equally with fairness and respect and that their diversity is both valued and celebrated;
- That our working practices are characterised by flexibility, efficiency and excellence, the results of a supportive management style that enables its diverse work force to realise their full potential in serving our customers;
- That our employee profile reflects diversity at every level of the organisation, and posts will be filled through a fair system of recruitment and promotion.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REVISION AND CIRCULATION OF THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Registered Manager is responsible for the annual revision of the Statement of Purpose. Revisions may occur at other times if necessary. Staff and Foster Carers will be consulted on proposed revisions as appropriate.

The revised Statement of Purpose will be presented to the Fostering Panel annually for their consideration.

The revised Statement of Purpose will be sent to Ofsted annually and when any significant changes have been made, within 28 days of approval by the Registered Provider.

The Statement of Purpose will be available to all staff via the Councils Intranet and to members of the public via Brent Councils website. Paper copies can be provided to looked after children and their parents on request.

Useful Contacts

Brent Placement Service
Brent Civic Centre
Olympic Way
Wembley HA9 0FJ / Tel: 020 8937 4538
fostering@brent.gov.uk

Fostering Network
87 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8HA / Tel: 020 7620 6400
info@fostering.net

The Independent Review Mechanism
Unit 4, Pavilion Business Park
Royds Hall Road
Wortley, Leeds LS12 6AJ
Tel: 0113 202 2080 or 0845 450 3956
Website:
www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk
Email: irm@baaf.org.uk

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231 /
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk