



City of London

Corporate Parenting Strategy and Fostering Arrangements

Statement of Purpose

Introduction

This Statement of Purpose explains our vision, governance and objectives regarding how we in the City of London discharge our duties in order to maximise positive outcomes for our Looked After Children, including the commissioning of foster placements. In doing so, it demonstrates how the City of London Children's Social Care Service meets the applicable Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, relevant to the unique set of circumstances within which the City of London Children's Social Care operates.

Background

We are proud of the high standards we have for City of London (CoL) children. We want them to grow up happy, safe, strong and equipped to lead successful lives. The Children and Young People's Plan (see Appendix 1) vision for all our children and young people is:

Nurturing the future now; we want to ensure every child and young person in the City of London is safe, happy and healthy and is able to achieve their full potential. We will achieve this through support that is of high quality, and is easy to access in the right place, at the right time.

The Children's Executive Board (CEB) is the Strategic Multi Agency partnership for Children and Young People in the City of London. It is chaired by the Director of Children and Community Services and has representation from statutory and the voluntary sector agencies.

The CEB is responsible for ensuring the objectives and priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) are delivered. Looked After Children priorities are included within the CYPP and are monitored via the Corporate Parenting Task Group and the CEB. The CYPP priorities are:

1. **Stronger Safeguarding-** Focuses on ensuring that there are high standards of safeguarding across all agencies and there is a seamless service for children and Families in the City of London.
2. **'Early Help' offer-** We are committed to a long term shift in our mainstream resources towards greater prevention and a cohesive offer of services to ensure that families' needs are identified at an early stage so that they receive the right service at the right time to further reduce the demand for specialist services.
3. **Children's Workforce Development** – The children and young people in the City have a suitably skilled and trained children's workforce.
4. **Healthy Living-** With a key focus on young people adopting a healthy lifestyle and knowing what resources are available in the City of London.
5. **Achievement & Learning-** That we can continue to close the gap in attainment and skills between disadvantage groups and their peers.
6. **Partnerships-** There is effective joint working sustained by a shared language and shared process.
7. **User Engagement-** we will specifically focus on consulting, involving and engaging everyone across the City of London in developing, improving and evaluating the services we offer to ensure that we are collectively 'making a difference'.

The work of the CEB is driven on a day to day basis through its 4 sub committees, the Safeguarding Sub Committee, the Early Intervention and Prevention Sub Committee, the Health Outcomes Sub Committee and the Participation and User Engagement Sub Committee.

The Corporate Parenting Role

The political structure of the City of London is based on a Committee Structure. The traditional role of the Lead Member is undertaken by the Chairman of the Department for Community and Children's Service Grand Committee.

The Corporate Parenting and Young Peoples Task Group (CPYPTG) operates as a 'sub-committee' of the Grand Committee. The CPYPTG provides oversight and scrutiny of matters relating to Looked After Children and Care Leavers. It is chaired by the Deputy Chairman of the Grand Committee and made up of 4 other members of the Grand Committee. The CPYPTG is provided with updates on policy, practice and performance developments as well as qualitative information

on the outcomes of the individual Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Members of the CPYPTG will also on occasion meet with young people.

Most children and young people live successful and happy lives within their families and have little need for external support other than that provided universally by services such as health or education. For some, targeted and specialised support is required to help address particular problems and maintain the family as a unit.

However, for a small number of young people, we know that targeted and specialist support maybe insufficient to ensure their safety and well-being. In these cases, either with the agreement of the parent/s, through care proceedings or because the Child has arrived as an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker, the Local Authority needs to assume responsibility for these children.

Children in this situation come into care and the Local Authority takes on the role of Corporate Parent. Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the duties of the Local Authority and its partners to children and young people in care. Its central principle is that the Local Authority and its partners should parent children in care the same way any parent parents their own children.

In essence it means:

- Accepting responsibility for all children in the Council's care
- Making their needs a priority
- Seeking the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own child.

The Children Act 1989 defines a child as being aged 0 - 18 years, but the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extends a Local Authority's responsibilities to care leavers up to the age of 21, or 25 if they are in full-time education.

When a Local Authority looks after a child or young person, it has a legal responsibility to share the duties and responsibilities of the child's parent. Where a child or young person is subject to a Care Order, this responsibility is conferred upon the Local Authority by a Court. Although it is best practice not to make any decision in relation to the child or young person in isolation from considering the wishes and feelings of the parent, the Local Authority does have the power to do so. These powers include giving consent for children or young people to undergo medical interventions.

Unlike children or young people subject to Care Orders, children and young people in care under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 are looked after under a partnership arrangement with the parent. Again parental responsibility is shared but the Local Authority is not permitted to consent on behalf of the child or young person. An arrangement under Section 20 may be discharged at any time by a parent and the child or young person must be returned home.

Irrespective of how a child or young person comes into our care, it is always more beneficial to the child or young person that the Local Authority works in partnership with the parent whenever it is possible.

In order to fulfil our role as a responsible Corporate Parent, this Strategy and Statement of Purpose confirms our commitment and determination to deliver improved outcomes for our children and young people in care. We want their childhoods to be safe, secure, healthy, productive and enjoyable, as well as providing stable foundations for the rest of their lives.

As such our aims for our Looked After Children are just the same as for every other City of London child however, we seek to achieve these aims by offering additional support for the children and young people through close working relationships with the children, young people and their carers and, with a range of partners and agencies.

This is a shared responsibility which must be jointly owned by other public services, notably schools and health, community organisations, foster carers, families and friends. However, as the corporate parent for Looked After Children, we in the City of London are committed to taking the lead in ensuring effective delivery.

The following objectives will drive our work to ensuring our Looked After Children achieve the best possible outcomes:

- Securing and supporting secure, stable, safe, high quality placements for our Looked After Children (NMS 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11)
- Supporting successful education, health and social development outcomes and helping Looked After Children make an effective transition into adulthood (NMS2, 6, 7, 8, 12)
- To ensure that every child's voice is heard in the planning and shaping of their care (NMS 1, 2)

Our Objectives

Securing and supporting secure, stable, safe high quality placements

The one thing that makes the biggest difference to the lives of Looked After Children is being in the right placement. If a child is with kind, understanding and committed carers who have the capacity to see them through the difficult times, then there is a good chance that the care experience will be a positive one. If the child does not have a placement like this and if the child experiences several changes of placement, then they are unlikely to achieve good outcomes and the care experience might well have compounded the trauma and disadvantage that the child entered the care system with.

Our commitment, in line with the legislation, is that:

- Every placement decision should be based on a proper assessment of the child's need and taking into account the child's wishes and feelings.
- All placement decisions should be made with a view to maximising the opportunity for a child to find permanence.
- There must be a consistent focus on stability. Whilst some placement changes are positive (e.g. the child moving to their permanent placement from a temporary one) many are not. Being subjected to successive moves of placement and school leads to a sense of rejection, loss of confidence and capacity to trust.
- Placements should provide an experience of normal childhood, rather than an experience determined by potentially stigmatising regulations.

In the first instance we will look to secure a placement with family or friends where possible and where this is in the child's best interests. However the majority of placements in the City of London will be for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children where family and friends is not an option.

Because of the size of the City of London and the very small number of children and young people who come into care, the traditional Local Authority fostering services model does not apply. Instead, placements are purchased when needed from the Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector (PVI).

This process is undertaken by the Children's Social Care Team (see Appendix 2). The team is made up of 3 Qualified Children's Social Workers, a Team Manager and a Service Manager.

We use the Pan-London Agreement to secure quality and value for money placements. This sets out a range of providers which have been selected for quality and effectiveness and details standard fees to avoid variation and costly negotiations on a case-by-case basis.

Supporting successful education, health and social development outcomes and helping Looked After Children people make an effective transition into adulthood

As well as ensuring stable, secure, and where appropriate, permanent placements for Looked After Children, we are committed to supporting them to achieve successful education and health outcomes, including:

- Ensuring all Looked After Children under the aged of five are attending appropriate early years provision.
- Seeking to narrow the gap between the educational performance of the looked after population and the rest of the City of London school population at all Key Stages.
- Ensuring high level of attendance of City of London's Looked After Children so that it exceeds the attendance levels of the general school population national attendance levels.
- Ensuring no City of London child is subject to fixed term or permanent exclusions.
- Ensuring all Looked After Children have regular health, dental and eye checks.

Due to the size of the City of London, the role of the Virtual Head teacher is discharged through the Assistant Director People Services, supported by the Service Manager for Education and Early Years.

The City of London social work staff will ensure that Personal Education Plans are reviewed within statutory timescales for all Looked After Children.

The Personal Education Plans for the Looked After Children are subject to review at the Targeted Education Resources Forum, chaired by the Service Manager for Education and Early Years and made up of Senior Managers and Education based staff from the People's Directorate including Special Education Needs staff. Social Workers and carers will work directly with the schools to promote additional learning opportunities for our children and young people. If necessary, the Chair of the Forum, will liaise with relevant schools if satisfactory educational progress is not being made in a timely way.

Social Workers will work with carers to support the transition of Looked After Children into adulthood. The City of London has signed up to the Charter for Care Leavers in order to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring positive outcomes for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers. All Care Leavers are allocated a Qualified Social Worker.

Close working between Children's Social Care and Housing will ensure that all Care Leavers are given the highest quality service to support their housing needs. Where necessary, and subject to assessment and review, Looked After Children will remain in their placements as part of the transition plan.

Promoting continuous learning is key to supporting successful transitions for Looked After Children into adulthood. Pathway Plans are in place for all Care Leavers to support their transition.

In respect of health outcomes, the City of London commission Homerton Hospital Looked After Children services to provide the statutory health services. Due to the small numbers of Looked After Children, this arrangement is part of the Service Level Agreement that London Borough of Hackney has with Homerton Hospital. As a result of the changing health landscape and new commissioning models, the City of London is working with London Borough of Hackney, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Homerton Hospital to review these arrangements during 2013/14.

A key function of ensuring that the quality of the placements are meeting the standards required, is to ensure there is a strong working relationship between the City of London and the provider agency. As well as signing up to the Pan London contractual agreement, an annual monitoring meeting between the provider agency and the City of London will be held. This provides the opportunity for the provider agency to provide evidence and assurance that they are maintaining their standards as per the National Minimum Standards Framework (See Appendix 3).

To ensure that every child's voice is heard in the planning and shaping of their care

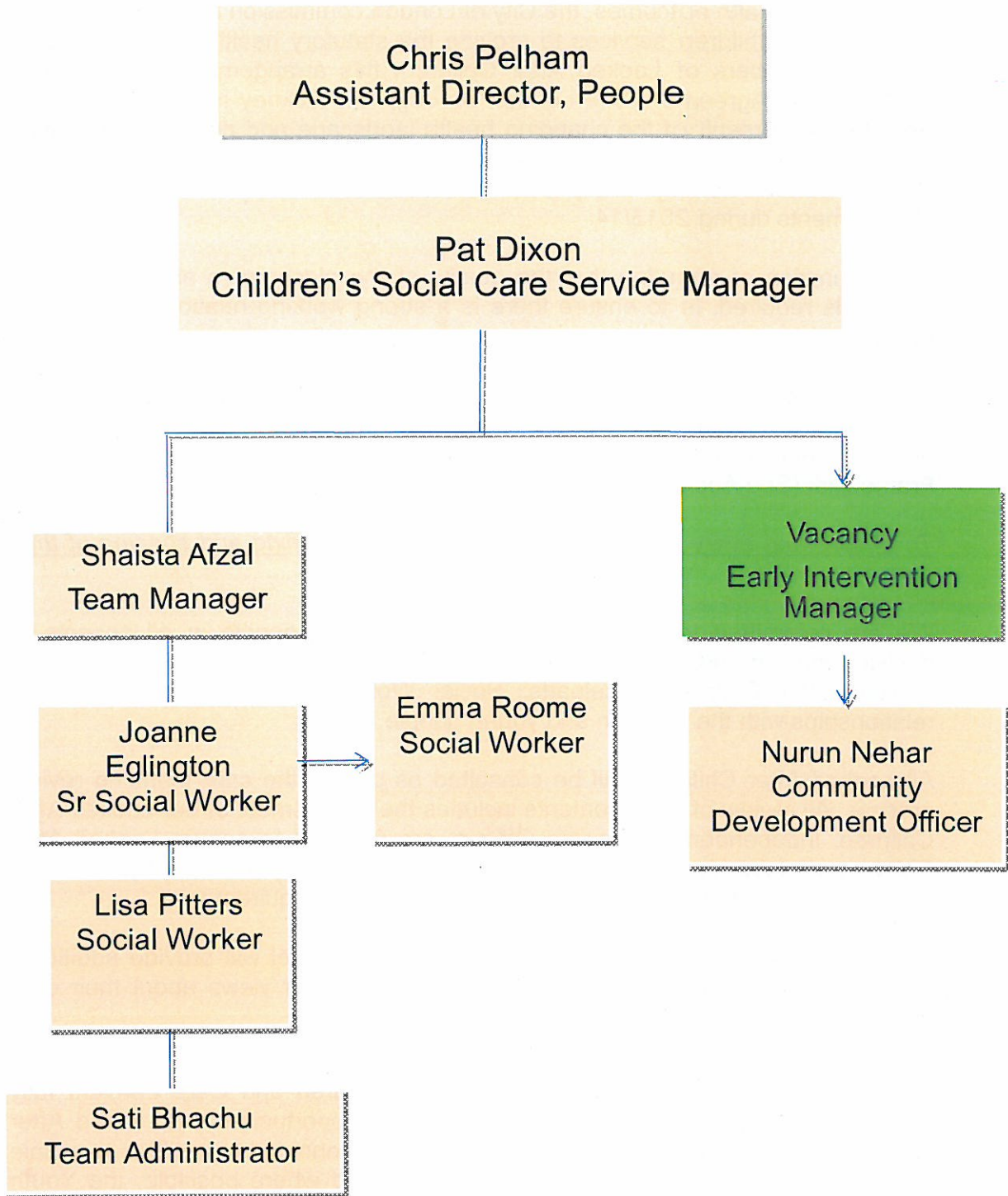
We are committed to engaging children and young people in all aspects of decision-making and service delivery relating to their lives. Because of the small Looked After Children caseloads, Social Workers are able to build close relationships with the children and young people.

All Looked After Children will be consulted as part of the care planning review process. All review of arrangements includes the involvement of our Looked After Children. Independent Reviewing Officers are required to ensure Looked After Children are fully consulted in their reviews. Visits to the placement by the social worker are expected to exceed the minimum statutory requirements.

Quality Assurance at the Departmental Leadership Level will provide additional opportunities for Looked After Children to express their views about their care and support arrangements.

We are committed to ensuring Looked After Children and Care Leavers fully participate in their care planning arrangements. Opportunities for Looked After Children and Care Leavers to engage at service planning level will be available through engagement with their social workers, and where possible, the Youth Engagement Sub Committee of the CEB.

Our Staff



The Management Team for Children's Social Care consists of;

Chris Pelham MSc DipSW (Assistant Director), qualified as a Social Worker in 1996. He also holds a Diploma in Neuro-linguistic Programming, Practice Teacher Award and a Certificate in The Introduction to Systemic Therapy. He has significant experience in operational, strategic and senior management roles in Children's Services across local and national government. He has served as Divisional Director for Safeguarding and Agency Decision Maker in one other London Local Authority and has also held roles of Head of Quality Assurance and Head of Service Improvement (including responsibility for commissioning and School Improvement) in another Local Authority.

Pat Dixon, R.G.M, R.M, DipSw (Children's Social Care Service Manager), Child Care Award. 6 years' experience as a senior manager in frontline children's services. Pat is the Local Authority Designated Office for Child Protection, and has overall responsibility for Children's Social Care. She is the panel member representing the City of London on the joint permanency panel for City and Hackney.

Shaista Afzal BA (Hons) Applied Social Studies, (Children's Social Care Team Manager), qualified as a social worker in 2003. Shaista also has a Child Care Award and is currently undertaking a MSc in Leadership & Management. Shaista has worked all her career in statutory children's services, initially as a front line practitioner and the last four years as a front line manager.

Comments and Complaints

If a comment or a complaint about the service is received, it is the responsibility of the Team Manager to try to resolve this in the first instance. If the complaint cannot be resolved at this stage then it may be necessary for the complaint to be formally registered.

The contact details for complaints is:-

Complaints Manager
Department of Community and Children's Services
City of London
P.O. Box 270
Guildhall, London
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Tel: 020 7332 3498
E:mail:CYPSComplaints@cityoflondon.gov.uk

