



FOSTERING STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

**Fostering Services (England) Regulations
2011**

April 2016



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. INTRODUCTION

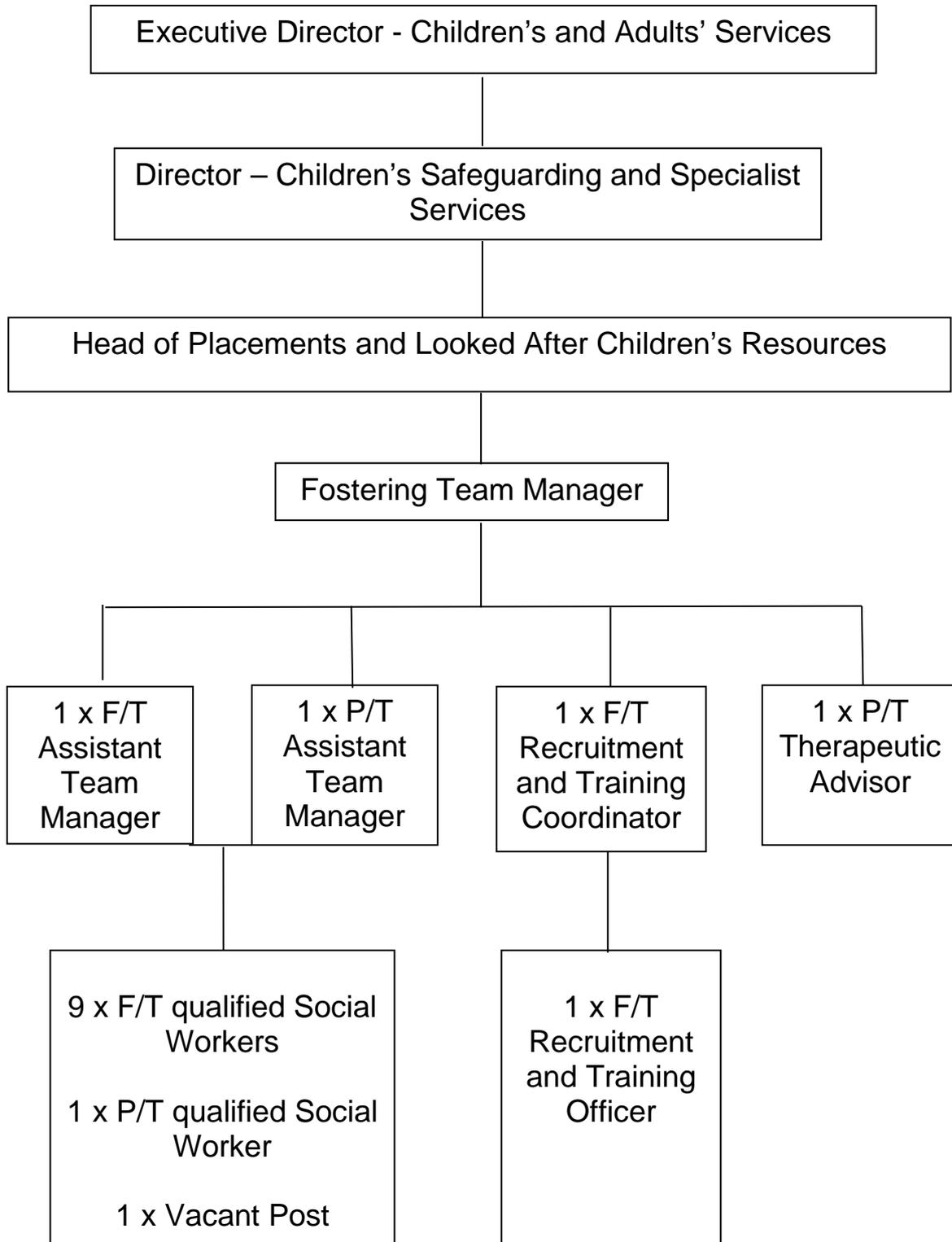
- 1.1 This Statement of Purpose relates to the fostering service provided by the London Borough of Hounslow Family Placements Team, under the requirements of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. This Statement of Purpose will be periodically revised to reflect any developments within the service, and will be subject to a review on at least an annual basis.
- 1.2 A copy of this Statement of Purpose will be provided to Ofsted and will be available to:
1. All staff working for the fostering Service
 2. All staff involved with the welfare of children looked after within the auspices of the Fostering Service
 3. Any child or young person living with foster carers
 4. Any parent or significant other of a child or young person placed with foster carers
 5. Members of the public
- 1.3 The London Borough of Hounslow as the Fostering Service Provider will ensure that the service is at all times conducted in a manner that is consistent with this statement.

2. OVERALL AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

- 2.1 To provide a safe and secure family environment for children and young people looked after by the London Borough of Hounslow, where each child will be supported and encouraged to achieve their full potential.
- 2.2 All foster placements must meet the identified emotional and physical needs of the individual child and young person. These developmental needs will include their racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, dietary and any other specific need.
- 2.3 Wherever appropriate, the Fostering Service will seek to identify placements that will enable siblings to be placed together.
- 2.4 Wherever practicable, the Fostering Service will seek to avoid multiple placement moves for children and young people.
- 2.5 Wherever practicable, the Fostering Service will seek to identify placements that can accommodate contact (where appropriate) with relatives and significant others in the child's and young person's network.
- 2.6 Consideration will be given to the child and young person's educational needs when deciding upon placements, and every effort will be made to ensure that wherever possible the child or young person can remain in their current educational placement.
- 2.7 The Fostering Service will consider placements for all looked after children and young people giving due regard to their identified needs and their wishes and feelings.
- 2.8 The Fostering Service will actively work in partnership with children, young people, their family, and other relevant professionals/agencies involved in promoting positive outcomes for children looked after by the London Borough of Hounslow. The primary aim of this partnership work will be to meet the needs of individual children and young people, and wherever appropriate to support family reunification.

3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

3.1



- 3.2 The Head of Placements and Looked After Children's Resources has overall management responsibility for the Fostering Service. The Fostering Service is managed by the Fostering Team Manager, who manages a team of Social Workers, Recruitment and Training workers and a therapeutic Advisor.
- 3.3 The Placements Service has its own dedicated Manager, one Social Worker, two Placements Officers, one Business Support Officer and one Information Officer.

SERVICES PROVIDED

- 3.4 The Fostering Service, as detailed above, comprises of three distinct functions and roles within the wider placement service. Each of the three distinct functions aims to work together to ensure the provision of a wide range of placements, providing for placement choice via in-house resources, and through private and voluntary providers.
- 3.5 The Fostering Service works in partnership with the Safeguarding and Support Teams, Intake and Support Teams, Through Care Team, Late Entry Team, Leaving Care Team, Social Work Team for Children with a Disability, the West Middlesex University Hospital Social Work Team, and Adoption and Permanence Team to ensure all children and young people looked after are safely and appropriately placed.
- 3.6 The Fostering Service aims to work with birth families, and other professionals within and outside the council, to achieve the best possible outcomes for looked after children and young people in Hounslow.
- 3.7 The Fostering Service works in a child centred, multi-disciplinary and anti-discriminatory manner.
- 3.8 The Fostering Service arrange, supervise and support short-term, long-term, respite and staying put placements with in-house foster carers.

4. PLACEMENTS SERVICE

- 4.1 The Placements Service provides a one-stop referral/access point for all children and young people's placement sourcing. The Placements Service provides a consistent and cohesive approach to placement planning, and enables the best use of in-house and commissioned services. The Placements Service ensures that principles of best value are applied to the procurement of services from the private and voluntary sector.
- 4.2 The Placements Service processes all referrals for the placement of looked after children and young people. Placements are sought from a wide range of agencies that include:
- In-house Fostering Service
 - In-house Residential Service
 - Independent Fostering Agencies
 - Private and Voluntary Residential Services
 - Residential Family Assessment Centres
 - Mother and Baby Assessment Centres
 - Secure Accommodation Provision
- 4.3 The Placements Service undertakes accreditation of identified external provision under the terms of the Pan London Consortium and West London Alliance. Representatives of the Placements Service play an active role within both the Pan London Consortium and West London Alliance, ensuring Hounslow are able to take full advantage of the knowledge and information that these consortiums maintain on external providers.
- 4.4 Representatives of the Placements Service attend Hounslow Children and Families' weekly Access to Resources Panel, ensuring that all placement referrals have been accessed appropriately and identified placements meet individual need.
- 4.5 The Placements Service ensures that complaints/concerns regarding external providers are appropriately investigated by the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), and information is passed on a need to know basis to Ofsted.

- 4.6 The Placements Service operates a duty service from 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday. The service responds to requests for placements as per 4.2 above.
- 4.7 The Placements Service is responsible for identifying appropriate placements, obtaining statutory and regulatory checks, negotiating placement costs, and ensuring associated contracts reflect the agreed package of care.
- 4.8 The Placements Service maintains and provides information on the availability of in-house placements, and approved and accredited external resources.
- 4.9 All referrals for Regulation 24 (of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010) assessments are processed by the Adoption and Permanence Team following receipt of an appropriately compiled suitability report submitted by the relevant social work teams.

5. RECRUITMENT & TRAINING

The recruitment and training function of the Fostering Service undertakes all publicity and marketing to recruit in-house foster carers for the London Borough of Hounslow.

SERVICES PROVIDED

- 5.1 The team aims to recruit the number of new foster carers identified in the annual recruitment strategy, who can meet the diverse needs of Hounslow's children and young people.
- 5.2 Recruitment outcomes are linked to the implementation of the annual recruitment marketing strategy, employing a variety of marketing methods.
- 5.3 The recruitment targets will be based on the projected placement needs of looked after children in Hounslow. Targets will be set in accordance with any identified gaps in the Fostering Service profile, in comparison to Hounslow's looked after children and young people's population in terms of age, sibling groups, race, culture, ethnicity, religion and language.

ASSESSMENT & APPROVAL OF FOSTER CARERS

- 5.4 The Fostering Service will make use of a competency-based approach in all the stages of assessment and approval of foster carers.
- 5.5 The Fostering Service endorses the Fostering Network Code of Practice, that using common, standard tools, such as the Fostering Network's assessment tools or CoramBAAF forms and draft letters, fostering agencies are more likely to achieve uniform standards. The Fostering Service therefore utilises the above tools as appropriate in the assessment and approval stages of fostering applications for the London Borough of Hounslow.
- 5.6 The Fostering Service promotes the following values underpinning the competency-based approach that are an integral part of the assessment process:

- Safeguarding children's welfare is paramount
- Individuals are respected
- Difference and diversity is valued
- Equality is promoted
- Discrimination is challenged
- Confidentiality is maintained on a need-to-know basis
- Advice and feedback is provided in a constructive way
- Applicants are enabled to demonstrate their competence
- Standards of childcare are explicit and agreed

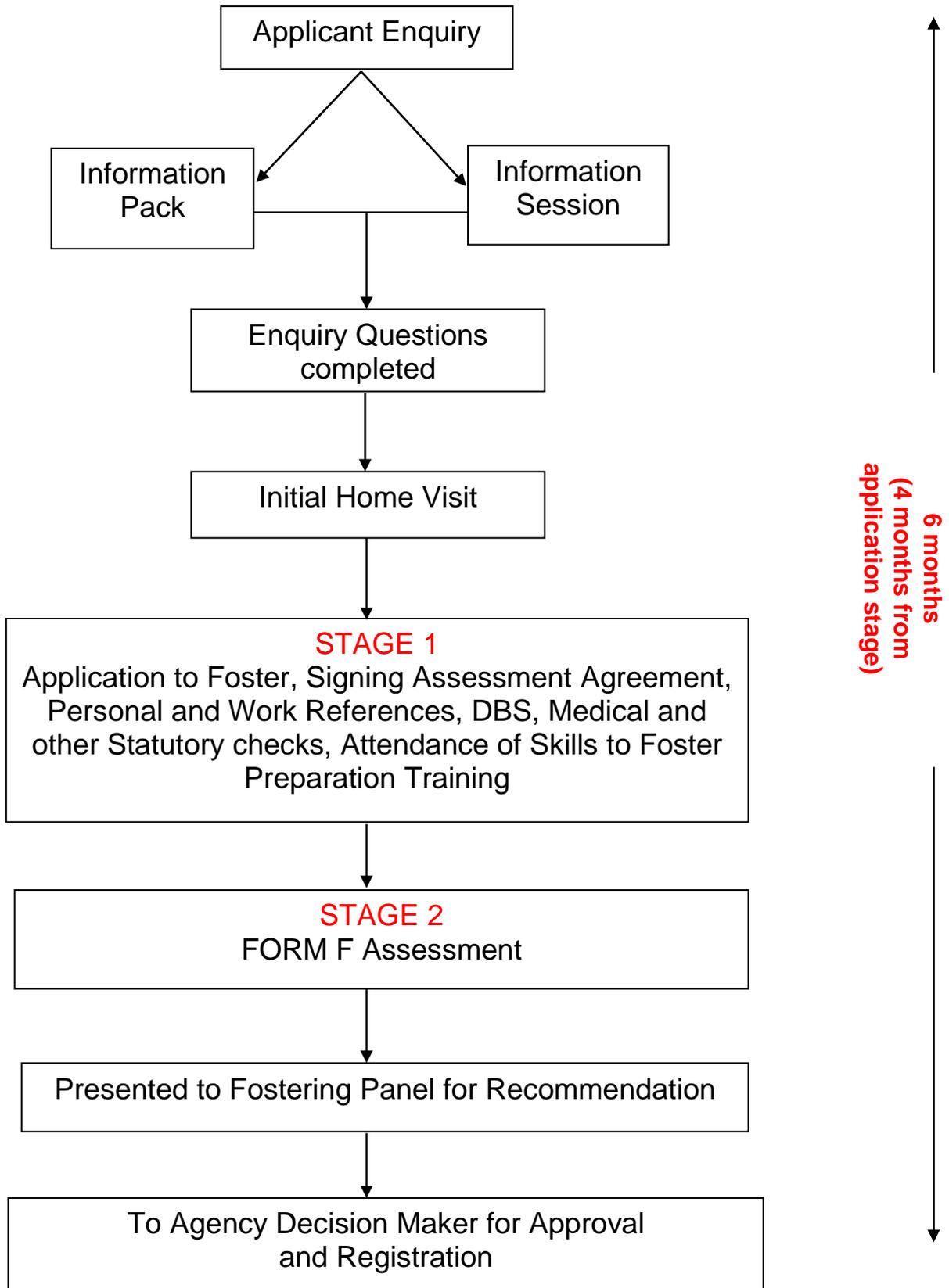
CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF FOSTER FAMILIES

5.7 All prospective foster carers will be rigorously assessed prior to approval to foster for Hounslow. In addition to meeting the statutory legislative requirements of the Children Act 1989, and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, prospective foster families will be expected to meet the following selection criteria:

- To have a spare bedroom except where only fostering babies between the ages of 0-2 years. In the case of kinship carers, Regulation 24 (of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010) bedroom sharing between the carer's own child and the foster child may be permitted following a risk assessment
- To have a satisfactory social services record
- To have a satisfactory police record as evidenced by an enhanced DBS check
- To have a satisfactory medical report from a GP
- If living with a spouse/partner, the relationship should be established and secure
- To have a satisfactory community support network
- To have an ability to communicate effectively with adults and children, by telephone, in writing and verbally
- To have an ability to use a computer to write word documents and to access emails
- To have the ability to be flexible and accept necessary change

- To have a non-judgemental attitude
- To accept that many looked after children have suffered significant harm, and to work positively where necessary with their family
- To have the commitment to attend training events and support groups
- To have an ability to use training opportunities and assimilate training information to continuously improve their childcare knowledge and skills
- To adhere to the boundaries of confidentiality on a need-to-know basis
- To agree that it is inappropriate to hit, shake, push, slap or smack a foster child, deprive a child of food or drink as a sanction, use verbal abuse, restrict or refuse visits/communication with social workers, ask a child to wear distinctive or inappropriate clothing, or lock a child in a room as a sanction
- To have a willingness to support a child/young person's attendance for educational needs and medical/therapeutic appointments including the provision of transport where necessary
- To have a willingness to support a child to achieve his/her potential in education
- To have a willingness/ability to provide for a child's race, cultural, ethnic religious and dietary needs
- To promote contact, where appropriate, with the birth family/significant others, including the provision of transport to contact venues

5.8 FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & APPROVAL PROCESS FLOWCHART



RECRUITMENT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

5.9 Applicant Enquiry:

All interested applicants who contact the Fostering Service via the free phone telephone number will be able to speak to a member of our recruitment staff. Applicants are also able to complete an online enquiry form via Hounslow's website. A fostering information pack is sent to all interested enquiries within 48 hours.

5.10 Enquiry Questions:

Applicants will answer short enquiry stage questions with a member of our recruitment staff over the telephone. The answers to the enquiry stage questions are then discussed with the Assistant Team Manager to decide if an initial visit should take place with the applicant.

5.11 Initial Home Visit:

A social worker will visit the applicant at their home. During this visit, applicants will be provided with further information about the fostering role, and the roles/responsibilities of the Fostering Service staff. Information will also be given about the Skills to Foster preparation training and the assessment process. The fostering tasks and impact on family will be discussed with the applicant in more detail. The need for all members of the household to consent to statutory checks and information on these checks will be explained. In addition, Hounslow's requirements in terms of health and safety standards will be explained in case the application cannot proceed because certain essential criteria are not fulfilled.

The purpose of the visit is to establish the applicant's commitment to fostering and fostering tasks, and to look at their suitability and the suitability of their home.

Following this initial home visit, applicants will be given feedback, which will be recorded on file. A decision will be made as to whether to proceed further with the application or not. If the decision is to not proceed further, then a letter will be sent to the applicants explaining reasons for this decision. Alternatively, if the decision is to progress the application further then an application form is sent out to the applicant.

5.12 Stage One:

Once a completed application form and consent to statutory checks form is received, stage one of the assessment can proceed.

When a person applies to foster, the Fostering Service will assess their suitability in accordance with Regulation 26. Regulation 26 (1A) requires the Fostering Service to obtain the information on applicants specified in Part 1 of the Schedule 3, as outlined below:

- Applicant's full name, address and date of birth
- Applicant's health, supported by a medical report
- Adults and children in the household and children not living in the household
- Particulars of household accommodation
- Outcome of any previous application made to foster, adopt or other child care provision by any member of the household
- Name and address of any fostering or adoption service that the applicant has been approved by in the preceding 12 months
- Names and addresses of 2 personal referees; to interview them and prepare written reports of the interview
- Local Authority checks including a written reference from a previous agency if a person has been an approved carer
- Details of current and previous marriages, partnerships or similar relationships
- Enhanced DBS certificate for each adult member of the household

Regulation 26 (1B) and (1C) provide that if in stage one, it is decided that the applicant is not suitable to foster, they should be told in writing within 10 working days of all the information required in that stage being received and given full reasons for it. The applicant has no right to a review of this decision by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) or to make representations to the Fostering Service provider.

5.13 Stage Two:

If it is decided to undertake stage two of the assessment, Regulation 26 (2) requires the Fostering Service to obtain the information about the applicant set out in Part 2 of the Schedule 3 as outlined below:

- Details of personality
- Religious persuasion and capacity to care for a child from any particular religious persuasion
- Racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and capacity to care for a child from any particular racial origin or cultural or religious background
- Past and present employment or occupation, standard of living, leisure activity and interests
- Previous experience (if any) of caring for their own and other children
- Skills, competence and potential relevant to their capacity to care effectively for a child placed with them

Stage two assessment information can be obtained, and assessment carried out, in parallel with stage one of the assessment.

However, if the decision maker determines that an applicant is unsuitable to foster more than 10 working days after the information required by Regulation 26 (1A) has been received, or as a result of information required by Regulation 26 (2) then the provider must follow the stage two procedure and the determination must take account of a fostering panel recommendation informed by either a brief report or a full assessment report.

If in stage two following a brief or full report, it is determined that an applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant must be informed in writing that they may (within 28 calendar days) seek a review of this determination by the IRM or make representations to the provider.

6. ASSESSMENTS

- 6.1 Assessment of applicants is undertaken using a combination of Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) and the CoramBAAF 'Form F Assessment'. The assessment covers the areas as laid out in Schedule 3 (Regulation 26 of the Fostering Regulations 2011).
- 6.2 All assessment processes will be carried out in the following settings:
- The applicant's own home
 - In other relevant settings
 - Visits to referees
 - Using information collated during the 'Skills to Foster' preparation course
- 6.3 A variety of techniques will be used to gather information regarding the applicant's suitability to foster. These will include:
- The Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) to assist applicants and assessors establish what existing skills carers possess and what new ones they need to acquire
 - Attendance at 'Skills to Foster' preparation training and feedback from the trainers
 - Ecomaps, family trees and/or other personal history tools to gain information on applicant's motivation to foster and how their past history may impact on fostering
 - Referee visits and written references from other adults including previous partners who can corroborate the applicant's ability to relate to, and care for children
 - Face to face discussion
 - Records and reports

- Assignment and case studies
- Role play and simulation

The assessment will include a recommendation by the assessing social worker.

7. STATUTORY CHECKS & REFERENCES

7.1 Following written consent from the applicant, Hounslow Fostering Service will ensure that satisfactory clearance is received of the following checks and references before approval:

- Proof of identity – i.e. Birth Certificate, Passport, National Insurance Number
- DBS enhanced check
- Medical Report
- Social Services Department Records
- NSPCC
- Probation Service (if applicable)
- Any previous application to foster
- References
 - Personal x 2 (independent)
 - Family Member x 1
 - Employer's Reference (if applicable)
 - Previous spouse/partner's reference (if applicable)
 - Health Visitor (if applicable)
 - School (if applicable)

8. 'SKILLS TO FOSTER' PREPARATION TRAINING GROUP

8.1 The content of each group is set within an equalities and anti-discriminatory framework and covers the following topics:

- Motivation to foster
- Understanding the assessment process
- Support networks
- Role and expectations of foster carers
- Understanding of children's needs
- Child Protection/Children's Rights
- Children Act 1989
- Fostering Regulations (England) 2011/National Minimum Standards
- Safe caring
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Diversity and Equalities issues

8.2 London Borough of Hounslow is working with neighbouring councils within the West London Alliance (including Brent, Harrow, Ealing, Hillingdon and the Tri-Borough) to offer fostering applicants a choice of preparation training groups to attend in different boroughs. These preparation groups are held every other month at different times to offer flexibility to applicants.

9. APPROVAL PROCESS

- 9.1 Following satisfactory clearance of all statutory and other checks, as well as the applicants complying with health and safety requirements, the assessing social worker will establish when enough information has been received about the applicants in order for an assessment recommendation to be made.
- 9.2 Care will be taken by the assessing social worker to pay due attention to the life history of the applicant, and in so doing will avoid relying solely on the applicant's current circumstances.
- 9.3 The applicants will, at the conclusion of the assessment, be told of the assessing social worker's recommendation and the reasons for it. Feedback should be given in a clear and constructive way and recorded in order to meet legal requirements.
- 9.4 The structure of the final report will be within the framework of areas covered by the CoramBAAF Form F including evidence of TSDS Standards achieved.
- 9.5 Prospective carers will sign the report prior to submission to the Fostering Panel. Applicants have the right to add written comments or other information to their report if they wish.
- 9.6 Copies of the completed/updated CoramBAAF Form F assessment are circulated to members of Hounslow's Fostering Panel in advance of the scheduled meeting.
- 9.7 The assessing social worker will attend the Fostering Panel meeting to present her/his report. The prospective carer/s will also attend the Panel.
- 9.8 If the Fostering Panel makes a recommendation for approval of the applicant/s and this is agreed by the Agency Decision Maker (in Hounslow this is either the Director of Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services or Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance), written notice of approval specifying the approval terms will be given to the applicant/s.

- 9.9 On approval, the carer/s and the Fostering Service on behalf of the Council will sign the Foster Care Agreement that sets out the terms and conditions of the relationship between the foster carer/s and the Fostering Service.
- 9.10 If the Agency Decision Maker considers that an applicant is not suitable to act as a foster carer. He/she shall:
- Give the applicant written notice of their decision giving their reasons
 - Invite applicant/s to submit a written representation within 28 days of the notice
- 9.11 If the Fostering Service does not receive any representation within the 28-day notice period, it may proceed to make its own decision.
- 9.12 If the Fostering Service receives written representation it may refer the case back to the Fostering Panel or to the IRM (Independent Review Mechanism) for further consideration. A decision will then be made taking into account any new information submitted to the Fostering Panel or IRM and the applicant will be notified of the decision made in writing.

10. ONGOING TRAINING FOR FOSTER CARERS

- 10.1 The Recruitment and Training team is responsible for drawing together the annual training plan for Hounslow's foster carers.
- 10.2 The training plan will be developed by identifying core training skills, and targeting training needs as identified from foster carer annual reviews and in compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care.
- 10.3 The aim of ongoing training is to ensure that foster carers' knowledge and skills are developed to maintain high standards of childcare, and to keep carers up to date with new developments with regards to meeting the needs of looked after children.
- 10.4 All Hounslow foster carers are issued with a Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) pack for foster carers, which they are required to complete within twelve months of approval, with the help of their supervising social worker. Training and support groups have been provided for all foster carers in relation to completing the TSDS.
- 10.5 Foster carers are given mandatory training to complete and a variety of recommended courses to support their professional development. Training is held at venues in and around the borough. In addition to this, a variety of online training courses are offered to enhance knowledge and skills.
- 10.6 Hounslow Council and other neighbouring London boroughs (including Hillingdon, Harrow, Brent, Ealing and Tri-borough) are now working within the West London Alliance on a collaborative post-approval training programme for foster carers. This will complement the individual regional training programmes. This approach will expand the training opportunities available to foster carers to enhance their learning and development opportunities.
- 10.7 Foster carers are also offered further free training in Hounslow by the Hounslow Safeguarding Children's Board (HSCB). They receive a regular training schedule from HSCB and are encouraged to apply for training that is relevant to their development needs.

11. FOSTERING SUPPORT SERVICE

- 11.1 The Fostering Service provides support and supervision of all placements of children with Hounslow's short-term, long-term and private foster carers.
- 11.2 The aims and objectives of the Fostering Service are to ensure that all foster carers are providing care that safeguards and protects children within guidelines set down by statute and the department.
- 11.3 The Fostering Service will ensure that opportunities are provided to foster carers to gain all the necessary skills, knowledge, information and advice, in order to meet the needs of the individual children in their care.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

11.4 The Supervising Social Worker will:

- Undertake regular (4 - 6 weekly) supervisory visits to the foster carer's home and make telephone contact in between visits
- Undertake at least one unannounced visit to the foster placement each year
- Ensure information held on foster carers is up to date and includes current statutory checks, composition of the household and foster carer reviews
- Ensure that all foster carers receive up to date policies and procedures to include compliance with guidelines set out in the Foster Carers Handbook
- Ensure that each looked after child receives an age appropriate Children's guide pack
- Ensure that any concerns about the care of children are addressed and standards of care/child protection procedures are followed when allegations and serious complaints are made
- Ensure home visits are purposeful with an agreed agenda compiled by the supervising social worker and foster carer, recorded, and actions agreed and monitored in following visits

- Ensure home visits include an element of inspection of the home environment and standard of care offered to the child
- Monitor the foster carers' training and support needs, with mutually agreed objectives for the year. London Borough of Hounslow require carers to undertake a minimum of 3 training courses a year
- Undertake the foster carer annual review providing an opportunity to formally appraise the carer and plan for the carer's ongoing training and development needs
- Ensure that foster carers' training profiles are kept up to date and certificates are received by working in partnership with the Recruitment and Training Officer
- Maintain the foster carer's computer record, which should include records of supervisory visits
- Ensure information about the looked after child is stored securely by the foster carer. This will be regularly inspected by the supervising social worker
- Ensure that the carer has all the appropriate LAC forms, and that the Placement Planning Meeting is held within the required timescales
- Ensure the Placements Service has all the necessary information about carers to inform the decision making/matching process, and to maintain optimum placement functioning
- Maintain the welfare and development of the child in placement and keep up to date with the progress of the child's care plan
- Ensure that the placement continues to meet the child's needs and that any difficulty that the foster carer has in meeting the child's needs is addressed
- Communicate regularly with the child's social worker, and other professionals
- Undertake joint visits with the child's social worker as necessary

- Attend statutory review meetings with the foster carer and to support the foster carer in making a purposeful contribution to such meetings verbally, or if unable to attend with written reports
- Ensure foster carer's approval is annually reviewed, and first year annual reviews are presented to the Fostering Panel. The supervising social worker compiles a review report following consultation with the foster carer, child's social worker, Looked After Child (over the age of five), Independent Reviewing Officer and where appropriate, the Therapeutic Adviser and the child's birth parents. Each foster carer's annual review is chaired by a manager from the Fostering Service or an Independent Reviewing Officer
- Ensure any proposed change to the existing approval range, or Standards of Care reports are presented to the Fostering Panel, and the foster carers are invited to attend

THERAPEUTIC ADVISOR

11.5 Under the government Quality Protects initiative, the Therapeutic Adviser's post was developed. This unique support resource for Hounslow's foster carers aims to:

- Assist and support foster carers when caring for children and young people
- Work in partnership with carers to safeguard and promote the child's welfare
- Promote the health and wellbeing of children/young people looked after
- Work with carers to promote the identity, cultural and religious needs of children/young people in their care
- Prevent placement breakdown and reduce the number of moves experienced by children/young people
- Promote positive parenting skills

- Provide support and guidance tailored to the specific needs of the placement
- Assist and provide support to foster carers during the transition period of children moving to permanency/adoption
- Assist in the training of foster carers
- Offer consultation with other professionals working with foster carers

11.6 This support for carers is in addition to the support provided by their supervising social worker and is accessed via a referral system that can be triggered by the carers themselves, their supervising social worker or the child's social worker.

11.7 The support visits are time limited, and can focus on areas such as building a secure and positive relationship, managing challenging behaviours, play and communication, positive parenting and support, assisting transitions for children and young people to permanency or independent living, dealing with separation, loss and attachment, through to individual counselling for carers.

11.8 This direct work is focussed and planned via a work plan agreement, developed and completed together by the foster carer and the Therapeutic Adviser.

11.9 Each case is evaluated and monitored individually and these evaluations are ongoing throughout the support as well as at the end of the agreed sessions. This ensures the optimum support is being made available to help retain foster carers, while developing their confidence, skills and abilities in their role.

12. SUMMARY OF FOSTER CARER RESPONSIBILITIES

12.1 To be responsible for the care in one's own home of a child or children placed by Hounslow and to work with the Fostering Service and all those involved in helping looked after children fulfil their potential.

12.2 SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Caring for children

- To provide day-to-day care of the children being looked after
- To have regard to the particular needs of children separated from their families
- To take part in implementing the childcare plan, which could include specific tasks such as promoting contact with parents and others who are important to the child
- To promote the healthy growth and development of the child or children, with particular emphasis on health and on educational achievement
- To ensure that the children being looked after are encouraged to develop a positive understanding of their heritage, religion and culture
- Where appropriate, to assist and support parents and other people who are significant in a child's life, to sustain and develop positive relations with him or her
- To enable children and young people who are moving on, to do so in a planned, positive and meaningful manner
- To enable children and young people to attend and engage in leisure activities and pursue interests and hobbies in order to promote a healthy lifestyle
- To support children and young people to have a voice through engaging with LAC Participation Services and CoramVoice

Providing a safe and caring environment

- To ensure that children are kept safe from harm and abuse and that they are taught how to seek help should they have any worries about anything
- To promote the secure attachment of children to adults capable of providing safe and effective care
- To act as an advocate for each child
- To ensure children in their care use the internet and social media sites safely and carers will receive training to make sure this is undertaken effectively

Working as part of a team

- To be part of the Fostering Service and to work with other departmental staff and professionals within service guidelines, policies, and procedures
- To attend and actively participate in all reviews, family meetings, case conferences and court hearings as required, and to keep written records of placements and contribute to reports
- To take up appropriate training opportunities and recognise the benefit of continued training
- To deal with confidential information in a responsible manner

12.3 COMPETENCIES NEEDED FOR FOSTER CARE

Caring for children

- An ability to provide a good standard of care to other people's children, which promotes emotional, physical and sexual development as well as attending to their health and leisure needs and supporting educational achievement
- An ability to work closely with children's families, and others who are important to the child

- An ability to set appropriate and consistent boundaries, and manage children's behaviour within these, without the use of physical or other inappropriate punishment
- Knowledge of child development and an ability to listen to and communicate with children appropriate to their age and level of understanding

Providing a safe and caring environment

- An ability to ensure that children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse
- An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse and to know how to seek help if their safety or welfare is at risk

Working as part of a team

- To work as part of the Fostering Service along with other professionals as part of the team around the child, and contribute to the departmental planning for the child/young person
- An ability to communicate effectively
- An ability to keep information confidential on a need to know basis
- An ability to promote equality, diversity and rights of individuals and to appropriately challenge any expression of discrimination or prejudice whatever its basis
- To attend and actively participate in all reviews, family meetings, case conferences and court hearings as required, and to keep written records of placements and contribute to reports

Own development

- An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected carers and their families, and the impact fostering is likely to have on the carers and their own families

- An ability to have people and links within the community which provide support
- An ability to use training opportunities and to improve knowledge and skills
- An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress

13. PRINCIPLES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

- To ensure staff are adequately trained and competent in delivering a quality Fostering Service
- There are clear lines of accountability and effective management of the service
- All staff and carers have a valid enhanced DBS check which is satisfactory
- The service operates within the framework of equality of opportunity
- The service recognises and values the diverse nature of the community it serves
- All children are encouraged to reach their full potential socially and educationally
- All placements are monitored and supervised
- Staff and carers receive support and supervision
- The health, educational and social needs of children are met within placements
- Allegations against carers/staff will be investigated following departmental procedures
- Systems are in place to monitor the department's needs for placements. This information is to be used to inform recruitment and contracting with providers
- All foster placements provide a safe secure environment for children placed
- Children will be matched with carers who are best able to meet the identified needs of the child
- Life skills and opportunities are made available to all children appropriate to their age and developmental needs

- The Fostering Service is committed to meeting and enhancing the learning and developmental needs of staff and carers
- The Fostering Service has a clear strategy for the support of foster carers ensuring each foster carer has access to a supervising social worker
- The Fostering Service ensures that there are comprehensive and up to date records on all children placed and all foster carers maintain placement records. This information is accessible in line with data protection regulations
- The Fostering Service has clear administrative records and financial management systems pertinent to the running of the service
- The Fostering Service operates a fostering panel that provides a quality assurance role with regards to the recruitment and review of foster carers and foster placements. The panel will ensure that the welfare and safety of children is paramount in all decision making
- The Fostering Service will ensure there is a range of safe and appropriate placements for children looked after by the London Borough of Hounslow

14. STANDARDS OF CARE

- All children are entitled to live in a safe and secure environment
- Carers are given guidance on the use of restraint and corporal punishment
- Children will be matched with carers who are able to meet their identified racial, cultural, religious, social, emotional and developmental needs
- It is an expectation that all children will have their health, leisure and educational needs met
- Allegations and complaints against carers and staff will be investigated following the departmental procedures
- All carers will receive core training in respect of departmental policies and procedures
- Where issues relating to the standards of care arise in a placement the Fostering Panel will act as a quality assurance mechanism and where necessary consider the ongoing approval of carers
- Procedures will be followed in seeking exemptions and extensions to approval terms
- Children will receive written information about fostering
- Children's wishes, feelings and views about their placements will be sought regularly and formally as part of the foster carers' annual review process
- Views of other professionals will be sought in respect of placements as part of the reviewing process
- All foster carers will receive a copy of the Foster Carers Handbook and subsequent amendments as and when issued
- The Hounslow Pledge is outlined in the Young Person's Hounslow Website. The link for this is www.younghounslow.info/. The Hounslow Pledge is located in the Children in Care section of the website

15. ESTABLISHMENT OF FOSTER CARERS

The following information was established as of March 2016.

15.1 Total Number of Approved In-House Short Term and Long Term Foster Homes: **80**

15.2 Total Number of Short Term Foster Homes: **35**

15.3 Total Number of Respite Foster Homes: **1**

15.4 Total Number of Approved Households: **116**

15.5 Total Number of Approved Male Foster Carers: **74**

15.6 Total Number of Approved Female Foster Carers: **115**

15.7 Total Number of Approved In-House Foster Carers: **189**

15.8 Age Range of Foster Carers:

	Female	Male	Total
29 and under	0	0	0
30 – 39	13	5	18
40 – 49	27	16	43
50 – 59	55	32	87
60 and above	19	22	41

			189

15.9 Total Number of Staying Put Placements: **7**

15.10 Ethnic breakdown of current Foster Carers:

	Female	Male	Total
White British (A1)	50	36	86
White Irish (A2)	6	0	6
Any Other White Background (A3)	5	5	10
White & Black Caribbean (B1)	0	0	0
White & Black African (B2)	2	0	2
White & Asian (B3)	0	0	0
Any Other Mixed Background (B4)	1	0	1
Indian (C1)	17	9	26
Pakistani (C2)	11	11	22
Bangladeshi (C3)	0	0	0
Any Other Asian Background (C4)	2	2	4
Black Caribbean (D1)	6	1	7
Black African (D2)	11	10	21
Any other Black Background (D3)	1	0	1
Chinese (E1)	0	0	0
Any Other Ethnic Group (E2)	2	1	3
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TOTAL	114	75	189

15.11 Registrations/Deregistrations of Foster Carer households from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016:

Number of Registrations/Approvals: **6**

Number of Deregistrations/Resignations: **12**

15.12 An up to date information report on the population of children in care according to age, gender and ethnicity is available from the Fostering Service.

16. COMPLAINTS, ALLEGATIONS AND STANDARDS OF CARE

16.1 Each issue has been investigated by staff within the Fostering Service, details and outcomes of which are recorded in the service complaints monitoring file, available for inspection.

Since November 2014, there have been four complaints/allegations/standards of care received by the Fostering Service.

In seeking to further improve the process, as of November 2015, learning and changes in procedure from complaints/allegations will be added to the file, as these are established to evidence London Borough of Hounslow's commitment to improving services for foster carers and looked after children.

16.2 Any complaints in the first instance should be brought to the attention of a social services staff member and highlighted to line management. The complaint should be acknowledged in writing by either the staff member receiving the complaint or the line manager. Complaints received by senior managers should be acknowledged and passed to the line manager of the relevant service. Complaints passed to the Director by Members on behalf of the person making the complaint will also be acknowledged and follow the procedure in the normal way.

For complaints and representations procedure, please refer to Appendix 1 in this document.

16.3 Any complaints, allegations and standards of care issues regarding our service should be made in writing to:

Fostering Team Manager
Fostering Team
London Borough of Hounslow
Civic Centre
Lampton Road
Hounslow TW3 4DN
Telephone: 020 8583 3426
Email: Fostering.Duty@hounslow.gov.uk

17. KEY PERSONNEL OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

The management and social work staff in the fostering team all have a background of significant relevant experience in children and families as well as fostering and adoption work.

Head of Placements & LAC Resources:	Bob Spencer BSc Experimental Psychology, MSW, CQSW
Registered Team Manager:	Joan Blackman CQSW, Postgraduate Diploma in Management. Post Graduate Diploma in Public & Social Administration, MA Public Education & Teaching in Human Services. Post Qualifying Award in social work. Practice Teacher Award
Assistant Team Manager:	Gurinder Kaur M.Soc.Sc, CQSW
Assistant Team Manager:	Amy Keane B.Sc. Social Work
Therapeutic Advisor:	Vacant
Recruitment & Training Coordinator:	Kam Severin B.Sc. Social Sciences (Psychology)
Recruitment & Training Officer:	Manjeet Panesar B.Sc. Psychology/Sociology Locum Social Worker
Recruitment Social Worker:	Michelle Daley M.A Social Work
Recruitment Social Worker:	Kiran Randhawa BA Social Work
Supervising Social Worker:	Amie Macmillan M.A Social Work
Supervising Social Worker:	Kathryn Jarman MSW Social Work
Supervising Social Worker:	Kathy Kavanagh CQSW, Post Grad Cert in Child Care Studies
Supervising Social Worker:	Gilbert Ansa-Otu BA Social Work (Sociology)
Supervising Social Worker:	Kimi Penttinen MSW, M.A. (Sociology)
Supervising Social Worker:	Jonas Agambire MSW Social Work
Supervising Social Worker:	Christianah Jayeola BA Hons Interprofessional Learning (Social Work)
Supervising Social Worker:	Priti Bharatey MSW Social Work, MBA
Fostering Team Administrative Assistant:	Harpal Nagi Diploma in Secretarial Studies
Fostering Panel Administrator:	Karen Blake NVQ 3 in Business & Administration
Children's Placements Information Officer:	Rahul Monga B.Com/MBA
Business Support Officer:	Franklyn Wellington AMIAS
Allowance Officer:	Paul Silvey In Service Training Social Care
Acting Placements Manager:	Polly Dhinsay
Placements Officer:	Priya Saravanan B.A.B.L., (LAW)

APPENDIX 1

COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS PROCEDURE

1. Legislation

This Representation and Complaints Procedure conforms to the requirements of the Children Act 1989.

2. Introduction

For the purpose of this procedure, a representation:

“includes enquiries and statements about such matters as availability, delivery and nature of services and will not necessarily imply a criticism of the service provided.”

And a complaint is defined as:

“a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child, about the Local Authority’s exercise of its function under Part III of the Act.”

For the purposes of these procedures and as defined by the Act, the following persons can complain:

1. Any child who is being looked after by the Local Authority.
2. Any child who is in need but is not being looked after.
3. A parent of that child or someone with parental responsibility.
4. Any Local Authority foster carer.
5. Any other person who the Local Authority considers has sufficient interest in the child’s welfare.

This procedure may also be used for dealing with groups of children, rather than the individual, such as the residents of a children’s home, or a group of children with disabilities using day care provision.

3. Policy

Both the Council’s policy and the requirements of the above legislation aim to ensure a climate whereby customers feel they are entitled to a good standard of services that takes into account their needs and wishes in what we provide and the way it is provided. The need to consult customers/potential customers in developing and monitoring of services is seen as an essential part of ensuring that they are responsive to customers’ needs and wishes. Responding to customers’ complaints is a valuable way of considering what may have gone wrong in a particular instance, how to put it right for that individual and what lessons might be learnt from the complaint.

4. When should I use this procedure?

Customers should be aware of the procedure and should be enabled to use it whenever they are dissatisfied with the service. Particular attention should be given to the differing needs of people from different racial groups. Staff should be sensitive to gender issues and the needs of people with disabilities when responding to complaints. It is important to ensure that customers are treated no less and no more favourably than other if they complain.

5. Procedure

There are three stages to the procedure:

1. Problem solving
2. Investigation and decision-making
3. Review/appeal

Stage 1: Problem Solving

1. A complaint can be received by any member of social services staff from either complainant or his representative and brought to the attention of the line manager. The complaint should be acknowledged in writing by either the staff member receiving the complaint or the line manager. Complaints received by senior managers should be acknowledged and passed to the line manager of the relevant service. Complaints passed to the Director by Members on behalf of the person making the complaint will also be acknowledged and follow the procedure in the normal way.

2. A focussed discussion around the nature of the complaint will be held with the worker and/or manager, as appropriate, and the person making the complaint and /or his representative to indicate that the issue is being dealt with in a serious manner. This should be held as soon as possible but at the latest, within 5 working days of the complaint.

3. The nature and the context of the complaint should be clarified as well as the complainant's view as to a satisfactory resolution.

4. If the person complaining has not already had the support of an independent advocate, it should be ascertained whether s/he requires support/help to make the complaint. This may include interpretation/translation facilities. It may include giving advice about obtaining an advocate. The person complaining must be given a copy of the "customer complaints leaflet" (see guidance for managers). If any facilities are required then rescheduling of the meeting may be necessary to ensure appropriate support is available within 10 days of the complaint.

5. A satisfactory solution, from the point of view of the person complaining should be sought through discussion, investigation and negotiation.

6. Where an outcome is negotiated with the person complaining, a testing out period may be necessary to ensure that the intended change occurs. This testing out period should generally be for 20 days to ensure that changes have been maintained and the person who complained continues to be satisfied with the outcome.

7. Having gone through the steps above, a written statement of complaint, its nature, content and outcome should be prepared with the person complaining on the appropriate form (see form in guidance for managers).

8. Three copies of the form are required, one copy will be given to the person complaining; one copy will be retained with the Quality Assurance Section for monitoring purposes and one copy to the Service Manager.

9. A copy of the complaints form will not be retained on the customer's file (see guidance for Manager).

If the complaint is resolved to the customer's satisfaction at Stage 1, then no further action will be required.

Stage 2: The Investigation Stage

1. An unsatisfactory outcome from the customer's point of view may activate Stage 2 of the Procedure. The Procedure will become formal and comply with the regulations set out under The Children's Act. This stage must also be activated if the customer does not wish to use the formal stage, or the seriousness of the complaint warrants using formal stages only. A decision to do this should be made by a manager within the Department.

2. All complaints, including complaints from Stage 1 accompanied by the form and any other paperwork, should be forwarded to the Service Manager (Equality, Quality Assurance) whom for the purpose of this procedure is Designated Complaints Receiving Officer (DCRO). If the complaint has not been recorded in writing, this will need to be done before it is sent to the DCRO.

3. The DCRO will appoint a person independent of the Local Authority to take part in all discussions held about the complaint, including the child, and examine records pertaining to the case.

4. The DCRO will also appoint an Investigating Officer who will be a senior officer of the Department with no line management responsibility for those officers or services about which complaint is made.

5. The Investigating Officer shall complete his/her enquiries within 20 days. The Independent person shall complete his/her enquiries within the same timescale.

6. The DCRO shall then consider the complaint and the details of the investigation. The power to make any decision rests with the DCRO. However, the DCRO is required to discuss the complaint with the Independent Person before a decision is reached and to inform them of that decision.

7. The DCRO has 8 days from the completion of the Investigating Officer's enquiries to inform all parties of the decision.

8. The DCRO must arrange for the decision to be recorded in writing and sent to the child, the person complaining and the Independent Person. The person complaining must be advised that if s/he is not satisfied, s/he has 28 days to notify the DCRO that s/he wishes to appeal.

Stage 3: Appeal/Review

1. Where the person complaining is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigations, s/he will have the right of a review of the decision. On receipt of the intention of the person complaining to appeal, the DCRO will appoint a Panel. One member will be a senior manager within the Department but having no line management responsibility for children and families services. The second member may be an elected member of the Council. The Panel will be chaired by the third member, who will be independent from the Local Authority and not from an organisation receiving a grant from that Authority. The Independent Person will not be the same Independent from Stage 2.
2. The Panel will meet within 28 days of the complainant's request for a review. The person complaining has the right to attend the Panel meeting and may be accompanied by the child or children cited in the complaint. The Independent Person from Stage 2 also has the right to attend.
3. The Panel will consider views of all parties in writing, the outcome of the investigation and the views of the Independent Person in Stage 2.
4. The Panel should record the decision and forward this within 24 hours to the Director of Social Services and Health Partnerships, the person complaining, the child, if appropriate, and the Independent Person from Stage 2. If the Panel has not reached a decision it needs to reconvene within 24 hours to do so.
5. The Director and the Independent Person from Stage 2 should consider the results of the Panel and the Director will decide what action should be taken. He will convey this decision in writing to all parties within 10 days of receiving the Panel's recommendations. The Department will advise the person complaining of his/her right to take the matter to the Commissioner for Local Government Administration (the Ombudsman) if s/he remains dissatisfied.

6. Child Protection

Complaints about the application (or failure to apply) the procedures will be investigated by the Child Protection Consultant, but will be passed through the DCRO in the first instance. Complaints may be about the conduct of our child protection enquiries or the conduct and decision making of conferences. Disputes over inter-agency working should be included in this category.

Where people who complain are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation a review of the decision will be made by a Panel of three people, a subcommittee of members of the Area Child Protection Committee. The Panel will report to the Director within 24 hours of meeting. The Director will consider the recommendations of the Panel and inform all relevant parties, including the person complaining within 10 days of receiving the Panel's recommendation.