

HARINGEY FOSTERING SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT **2024/25**



PURPOSE OF ANNUAL REPORT

This report provides an overview of the work of the Haringey Fostering Service for the year 2024/25 and highlights the service outcomes, quality of practice and innovations with plans to continue to improve the service.

The purpose of this document is to report on the activity of the Fostering Service fulfilling obligations in the Fostering Services Regulations (2011) to review and improve the quality of care, and National Minimum Standards (2011) to report to the executive side of the Local Authority. It will cover performance and developments in the council's delivery of Fostering Services; how the council is compliant with key national minimum standards; the service offered to those seeking to foster and those children in care who are fostered.

This report details the work of Haringey Fostering Service from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 and sets out plans for service development until 31st March 2026.

Summary of 2024/25 Fostering Service Achievements

- Delivered targeted marketing campaigns to promote fostering in Haringey via digital media and community events.
- Embedded the Secure Base Model into Foster Carer Annual Reviews to ensure child-focused assessments.
- Continued regular Reflective Practice sessions to support peer learning and critical thinking.
- Used the Assessment Handbook to improve timeliness and quality of foster carer assessments.
- Delivered training on Kinship Care and Regulation 24 placements, with enhanced support for Viability Assessments.
- Improved timeliness of Foster Carer Annual Reviews with support from Independent Reviewing Officers.
- Approved 5 Task Centred Foster Carers; 9 applicants progressed to stage two of assessment.
- Approved 9 connected foster carers; 7 secured Special Guardianship Orders for permanence.
- Completed 36 Special Guardianship Assessments; 12 Orders granted; 10 connected carer assessments completed.
- Provided specialist training via Adopt London North on Permanency Planning and adoption legal processes.
- Introduced Foster Carer letters to children before each CiC review, supporting life story work.
- Delivered "Skills to Foster" training with care-experienced young adults.
- Included care-experienced young adults as members of Haringey's Fostering Panel.
- Implemented a 4-year Marketing and Recruitment Strategy to increase diversity and reduce reliance on IFAs.
- Achieved/exceeded 90% target for timely Annual Reviews.

- Maintained strong attendance at Foster Carer Support Groups.
- Launched a male Foster Carer Support Group, achieving a 400% increase in attendance.
- Re-launched the Mockingbird Project with new staff and partnership with the Fostering Network.
- Exceeded target of increasing placement capacity by 35 placements.

The Fostering Service is led by the Head of Service for Fostering, Children in Care, Brokerage and Permanency, and managed through a Service Manager.

In February 2023, Haringey Children and Families Services was inspected by OFSTED. Whilst the Fostering Service was not subject to its own inspection, there was positive feedback provided with some areas for development noted.

Ofsted confirmed that the recruitment of foster carers is an improving picture and has increased the number of foster carers available. They also said that foster carers receive a high level of support from their Supervising Social Workers, and a good training offer is available to our carers.

Areas identified for further development were the timeliness of support being provided to connected carers and lack of clarity on the number of foster carers taking up our training offer. As a service, we have continued to focus on our areas for improvement and continued good practice through 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.

The demand for foster placements has continued to grow, with an increased demand for family groups, care for teenagers and for children with complex needs resulting from experiencing multiple traumas during their childhood, or complex needs arising from disability.

We have developed a dynamic strategy, geared towards supporting the recruitment of new foster carers to meet the assessed needs as determined by the needs analysis; and is integrally linked with other key strategic plans and strategies for the Council. This report should also be read with Haringey Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

A key priority for Haringey Council is to ensure that children grow up safely and happily with their birth parents or within their wider extended family network. Where we identify that children cannot remain within their family, they may need foster care. The Fostering Service contributes to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people who are looked after by Haringey Children's Social Care.



We recognise that when a child is in our care, it is one of the most important and significant changes in their life and it is critical that the families who look after our most vulnerable children through foster care, provide the highest quality of care. A strength of Haringey Fostering Service is the ability of the staff to remain child-focused whilst providing an elevated level of support to foster carers.

The Fostering Service is a regulated service and subject to inspection by Ofsted as part of the ILACS inspection framework. Haringey Council's Fostering Service provides a range of short-term and permanent foster carers who have a diverse range of skills and experience. Foster carers provide family-based services ranging from weekend respite/short breaks to supporting birth parents and carers, preparing a child for adoption, or providing a permanent home for a child through to independence. We continue to see a high number of family members and friends come forward for assessments, while legal proceedings are underway, requesting to care for a child. In Haringey, we are committed to keeping children with their birth parents in line with the Families First agenda where it is safe to do so. Where it is not, we endeavour to keep them within their family networks.

Our Fostering Service

Haringey's Fostering Service comprises of four teams in total. There are two teams that provide day-to-day support and supervision to our in-house foster carers and connected carers, each comprising of a team manager and 5 supervising social workers. In addition to the Fostering Support Teams, we have:

- A team dedicated to foster carer recruitment
- Special Guardianship and Connected Carers assessments
- Kinship Care and post order support.

The service aims to listen and respond to our carers and over the years we have cemented our relationship and built on trust and transparency. Using carers' knowledge and experience has also helped us shape the service and build upon our strengths.

We aim to provide high quality care for children and young people in safe, secure, and nurturing families through recruiting and developing highly skilled foster carers.

The Service

Providing loving, secure, nurturing, fostering families for our children in care, is central to our corporate parenting strategy, and the backbone of our placement sufficiency

work. For another year Haringey's Fostering Service has continued to work very hard to recruit, approve and support new fostering families, whilst ensuring that our fostering community continues to understand, and support the children in their care.

Principles

- Children should be supported to remain with their families or connected carers where appropriate.
- If staying with family is not possible, early permanence through adoption or fostering is prioritised to promote emotional wellbeing and belonging.
- Children and young people's voices must be respected, with active engagement in decisions about their care and services.
- High-quality placements and robust support for parents and carers are essential to meet children's needs.
- Where appropriate, children should be placed within Haringey with local carers to maintain community connections.
- Parents and carers are integral in planning for the child.

The Fostering Service - Vision and Priorities

The fostering service is committed to delivering high-quality care and support for children in care and fostering families. The following priorities guide our approach:

Children in Care

- Live in warm, stable home and these homes shall be safe, secure, and nurturing.
- In these homes, will be receive care that promotes their confidence and future aspirations.
- Will receive support to achieve the best possible outcomes—short, medium, and long term.
- Are actively involved in their care planning.
- Have a voice in shaping the services designed to support them.

Social Workers

- Understand and value the role of foster carers.
- Receive relevant training and development to enhance their practice and support fostering services.

Fostering Families

- Are provided with high-quality, personalised training and development opportunities.
- Receive inclusive support, including appropriate out-of-hours assistance.
- Are recruited based on a wide range of skills and experiences to meet diverse needs, including family groups, older children, and children with additional needs.
- Are recruited from diverse backgrounds to improve the quality of matching and reflect our communities.

Service Values and Delivery

- Demonstrates core values of equality and diversity in both operational actions and strategic planning.
- Complies with all statutory, regulatory, and legislative frameworks.
- Embraces learning opportunities and ensures robust monitoring, review, and development of service delivery.
- Promotes a team-based approach centered on the child's needs, ensuring all professionals work collaboratively to achieve best practice.

The National Fostering Context (according to the DfE)

Key Statistics (as of March 2024):

- 83,630 children were looked after in the UK.
- 57,000 of these were in foster care — a 4% decrease from the previous year.
- 42,616 fostering households in England.
 - 11% were newly approved in the year.
 - Of these, 45% were Local Authority (LA) carers, 55% Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).
 - LA-approved task centred carers have declined 16% since 2020.

Recruitment & Retention Challenges:

- 8,485 households applied to foster (up from 8,010), but only 4,055 were approved.
- 4,820 households ceased fostering — a net loss of 765 carers.
- 60% of current carers are considering quitting due to burnout and lack of support.

Systemic Issues:

- The fostering decision process can take up to 2 years, making it hard to evaluate recruitment campaign effectiveness.

- Public perception is a barrier: while 73% are concerned about the shortage, only 7% would consider fostering in the next 10 years.
 - Common concerns: financial insecurity, housing, age.

Placement Impact:

- 13% of children are placed 20+ miles from their home authority.
- Separation of family groups and inappropriate placements are increasing due to carer shortages.

Government Response:

- £16 million (2025–26) and £25 million (2026–28) pledged to recruit 400 new households and enhance support (e.g., mentoring, training).
- Sector leaders argue that funding alone is insufficient — systemic reform is needed to improve carer experience and retention.

Children in Foster Care in Haringey 2024/2025

325 children were looked after by Haringey Council

235 children in fostering homes

65 children are cared for outside of a fostering arrangement.



136 children with Haringey foster carers

30 children with kinship carers ↑

18 children matched long term to their carer at Fostering Panel

95 children matched long-term to their carer

98 children with IFA carers ↑

The trend in Haringey saw a decrease of 11.65% in children in foster care from 266 in 2023/2024 to 235 in 2024/2025. We believe in part, this decrease is because of the implementation of a strong Early Help offer, an increased referral rate for Family Group Conferences, young people remaining with their carers post 18 under a staying put arrangement.

Further successful strategies implemented to prevent children coming into foster care included; parenting assessments completed at the child protection stage to identify support to parents, and therapeutic services working with children and their families while children remain in their families.

The number of children cared for by connected carers decreased from 46 in 2023/24 to 36 in 2024/25, a decrease of 21.74%. Again, we believe that this is through the work completed while children remain living with their families, and the network of family support being utilised to support parents and carers.

Alongside this, we have children where connected carers arrangements have ceased due to either a Special Guardianship Order being granted or a young person turns 18, and therefore no longer a child in care.

The number of children living with a Haringey task centred foster carer not a relative or friend was 124 in 2024/2025 which is a decrease from 125 in 2023/2024.

In 2024/2025 there were 9 Connected Carer approvals at Fostering Panel, which was an increase from 6 in 2023/2024, an increase of 33.33%. In 2024/2024 there were 30 children in kinship placements and 18 children in Reg 24 placements.

The number of children matched long-term in 2024/2025 through the Fostering Panel was 10, this was a decrease from 16 children in 2023/2024. This represents a 37% decrease in children being referred to fostering panel for long-term matching in 2024/2025. However, we should not lose sight of the overall increase in children being long term matched overall.

During 2024/2025 there were 7 children long term matched at Fostering Panel with Haringey foster carers which was a decrease from 10 children in 2023/2024. Of the 7 children long term matched in 2024/2025 there were 4 children who were matched with along with their brother or sister.

During 2024/2025 three children were matched with Independent Fostering Agency foster carers (IFA), this was a decrease from 6 children in 2023/2024, a 50% decrease.

CHANGING AGE PROFILE

Children with Haringey Foster Carers

Year	Age Group					
	Under 1	1 – 5	6-10	11 - 15	16+	Total
2024/ 2025	6	27	40	51	41	165
2023/ 2024	2	36	35	53	45	171

Children with Haringey and IFA Carers combined

Year	Age Group					
	Under 1	1 – 5	6-10	11 - 15	16+	Total
2024/ 2025	12	43	63	81	62	261
2023/ 2024	4	50	55	80	77	266

- The largest demographic of children in foster care of children by age, continues to be those aged over 11 years of age. Data indicates that outside of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, abuse and neglect and families in acute stress were the primary presenting needs identified at assessment.

Other factors included:

- Exposure to extrafamilial harm on young people including child sexual and criminal exploitation.
- Adolescent behavioural challenges

Haringey continues to monitor and acknowledge these pressures and that a multi-agency approach to provide support to young people and families, and to ensure the right support and resources are made available to foster carers to meet the needs of all children.

Ethnicity of Children Looked After (2024/2025)

Total number of children: 325

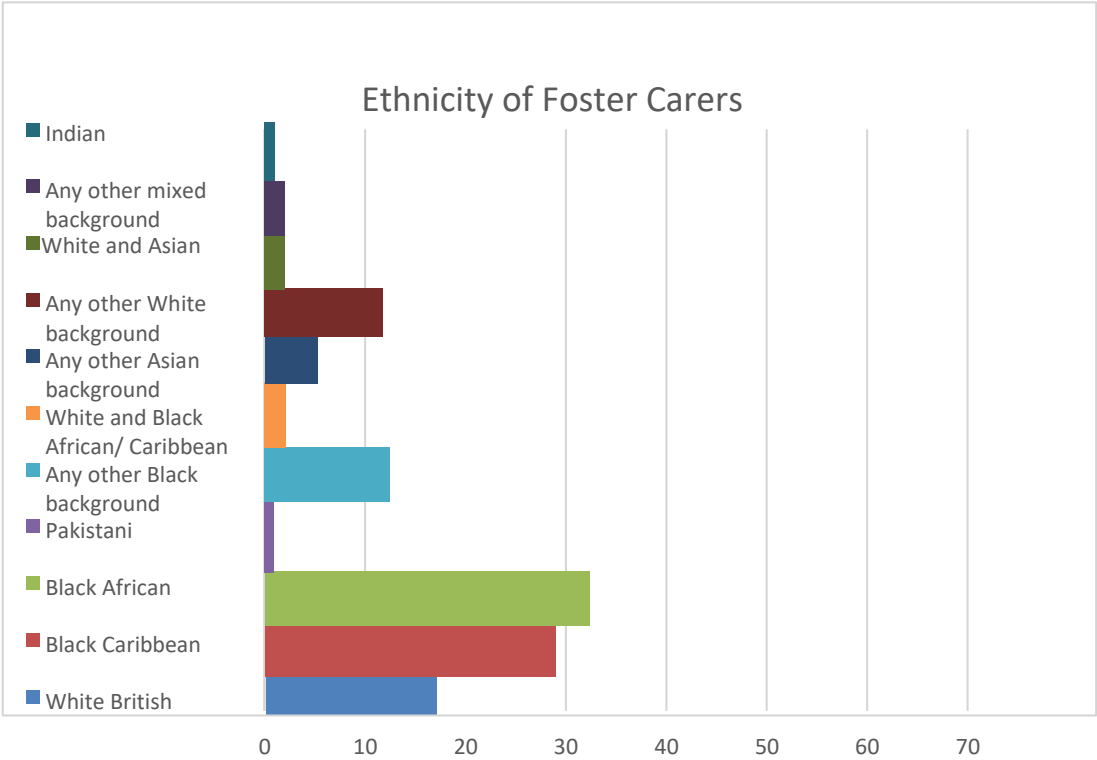
Ethnicity	Number of Children	Percentage
Other Ethnic Group	22	7.12%
Chinese	0	0.00%
Other Black background	49	15.08%
Caribbean	31	9.61%
African	45	13.85%
Asian	3	1.07%
Any Other Mixed Background	37	13.17%
Mixed White/Black(African/Caribbean/Other) background	29	8.92%
Mixed White Asian	3	1.07%
White British	42	12.92%
White Other	33	11.74%
Asian Other	9	2.77%
Other	23	7.08%

The majority of looked after children in Haringey in 2024-2025 were from a White or Black (African/Caribbean) background totalling 60.63%. In the year 2024-2025 the percentage of children looked after in Haringey in these groups entering foster care decreased on the year 2023-2024 from 67.6%. Although the number of children in these groups increased by 6 children, the overall percentage of children looked after in other categories reduced. This figure is also informed by the reduction in numbers of children looked after in 2023/2024 from 334 to 325 in 2024/2024.

The demographics of foster carers in Haringey are broadly reflective of our looked after children, enabling Haringey to achieve better matching of children to carers. In 2023/2024 we were able to meet 64.29% of our placements need with in-house foster carers. In 2024/2025 this reduced to 63.22% due to several carers retiring from fostering.

There is work underway to increase our capacity of in-house foster carers through up-skilling a proportion of our in-house foster carers and through targeted recruitment of specialist foster carers who have particular skills and experience and can care for children with more complex needs.

Ethnicity of 129 Foster Carers in Haringey



Overview of Ethnic Representation

ETHNICITY OF FC	NO
Asian Pakistan	1
Mixed White & Black African	1
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	1
Asian Indian	2
Not Obtained/Unknown	2
White Irish	2
Any Other Ethnicity	3
Asian Other	5
White Other	10
Black Other	13
Not recorded on LL	13
White British	17
Black Caribbean	27
Black African	32
Grand Total	129

Haringey's Provision of Foster Carers



As of 31st March 2025 there were 109 approved fostering households made up of 136 approved foster Carers.

Of the 109 fostering households, 12 households were made up of approved connected foster carers and 18 households were made up of Kinship Carer households (Regulation 24).

This equates to 11.9% of Haringey's Fostering Households being kinship carers.

Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025 there was a total of 30 Kinship Carer households in Haringey. This is in line with Haringey's emphasis on keeping children with their families and networks where possible and safe to do so and puts Haringey in a strong position for implementation of the plan for children's social care reform.

"The DFE reported that at March 2024, 13,660 children in care in England were living with kinship carers. This means that 24% of all fostering households are kinship households, representing an 18% increase over the last five years.

Haringey has also seen a gradual increase in kinship care households. Approvals during this period has increased from 6 to 9 (50%), while general fostering household approvals has decreased from 8 to 7 compared with 2023-2024 figures."

Source: Haringey Annual Fostering Panel Report 2024-2025 (copy in appendix)

Newly approved foster carers/connected carers 2024/2025

Ethnicity	Number
White British	10*
Black British Caribbean	5*
Black British African	1*
British South Asian	3*
White European British	4*

**Includes carers jointly approved.*

Total= 23 carers.

The 23 newly approved foster carers made up 13 newly approved households.

7 Task Centred Foster Carers (5 fostering households)

16 Kinship Carers (9 fostering households)

Newly approved foster carers 2023/2024

Ethnicity	Number
Black British African	1
Black British	5*
White British Caribbean	3*
White British European	5*
White European	2*
South Asian British	2*
Mixed White British/ Black Ethiopian	1*
White British	7*
Identity requested	2*

**Includes carers jointly approved.*

Total= 28 carers.

The 28 newly approved foster carers made up 15 newly approved households.

14 Task Centred Foster Carers (9 fostering households)

9 Kinship Carers (6 fostering households)

In 2023/2024 there were 334 looked after children in Haringey, whilst in 2024/2025 we had 325 looked after children. While the numbers of children looked after remains steady, in 2024/2025 there is an increase in approval of kinship carers and a reduction in approved task centred foster carers.

Utilisation of Foster Placements

As of 31st March 2025, showed Haringey had 325 children looked after, of which 136 children were cared for by in-house foster carers. With a total of 109 approved task centred fostering households, there was a 52.1% utilisation rate of fostering households. Through review of utilization of approved fostering households, it was noted that 25.7% were not utilised due to several factors set out in the table below.

Foster Carer on Hold	Foster Carer awaiting closure	Foster Carer has resigned awaiting closure	Inactive Foster Carer	Awaiting de-registration at Fostering Panel	Total
12	3	10	2	1	28

Work has already begun to improve utilisation of fostering households and to present foster carers to Fostering Panel for de-registration where this is appropriate. Haringey Fostering Service will seek to improve the utilisation of foster placements by de-registering carers more efficiently where they are no longer able to foster for varying reasons. Carers were on hold for various reasons ranging from ill-health, taking a break, caring responsibilities with family members etc.

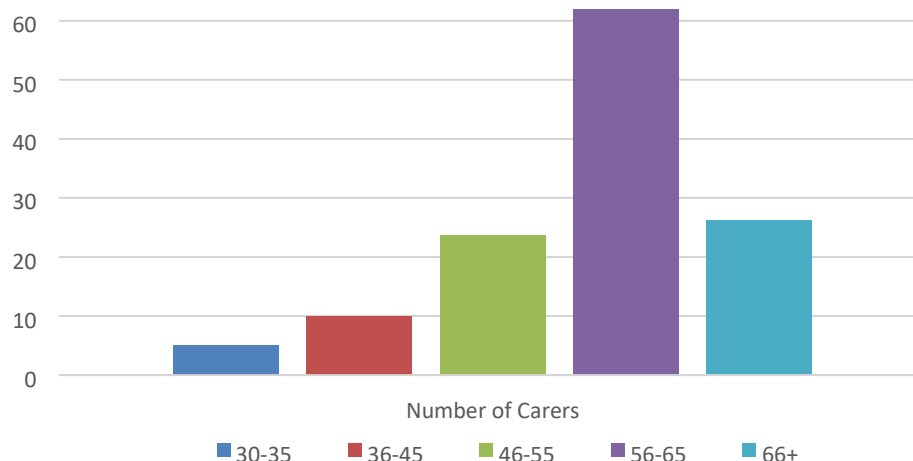
The duty Supervising Social Workers and Placements Officers work closely together and seek to identify placements for looked after children 'in-house' as a priority, keeping Haringey children in or close to the Haringey area and community. While it is acknowledged that 100% utilisation is not realistic or achievable for several reasons such as, respite placements will not always have a vacancy, and carers who commit to staying put arrangements will not be able to also accept an additional looked after child, we have set a target of 82% utilisation of fostering households for 2025/2026.

Haringey celebrates and appreciates its carers who have demonstrated care, commitment and resilience to our looked after children. There are currently 57 foster carers who have fostered for over ten years. There are 15 foster carers who have fostered for over 20 years, three of these have given thirty years of service. In addition, we hold a Foster Carers Celebration event where recognition is given for the care provided to our children.

We recognise that there is a need to recruit and retain carers who can offer Haringey children a similar level of commitment through their public service as Foster Carers. Haringey are continually thinking of ways this can be done within the current national climate of budgetary constraints on Local Authorities. An ongoing offer through foster carer development, appropriate support, training, supervision and reward seeks to underpin foster carer retention.

In 2024/2025, 9 carers were de-registered. Of these de-registrations, 4 carers were over 60 years old. Other reasons included personal reasons and competing work commitments. In one sense this is positive as this confirms that foster carer numbers are reducing for reasons outside the Council's control. Currently of the 129 approved foster carers, 62 are over 60 years old. This amounts to 48.06% of our foster carers approaching an age where they may consider retiring from fostering. This suggests that year on year, there is likely to be a comparable number of foster carer resignations due to retirement. To address this trend Haringey has in place a clear recruitment strategy.

Foster Carers by Age Range



The chart above shows the age range of Foster Carers and illustrates the need to recruit the next generation of carers to ensure sufficiency for foster homes in the future.

Fostering recruitment will need to target carers who are able to care for a range of children requiring foster homes. This is particularly necessary to increase choices for children with complex needs, adolescents, large sibling groups, unaccompanied minors and those at risk of child sexual and criminal exploitation. In addition, we have several children with disabilities who have specialist needs and there will be a focus on recruiting foster carers with additional and relevant skills who can offer short breaks or longer-term care to these vulnerable children.

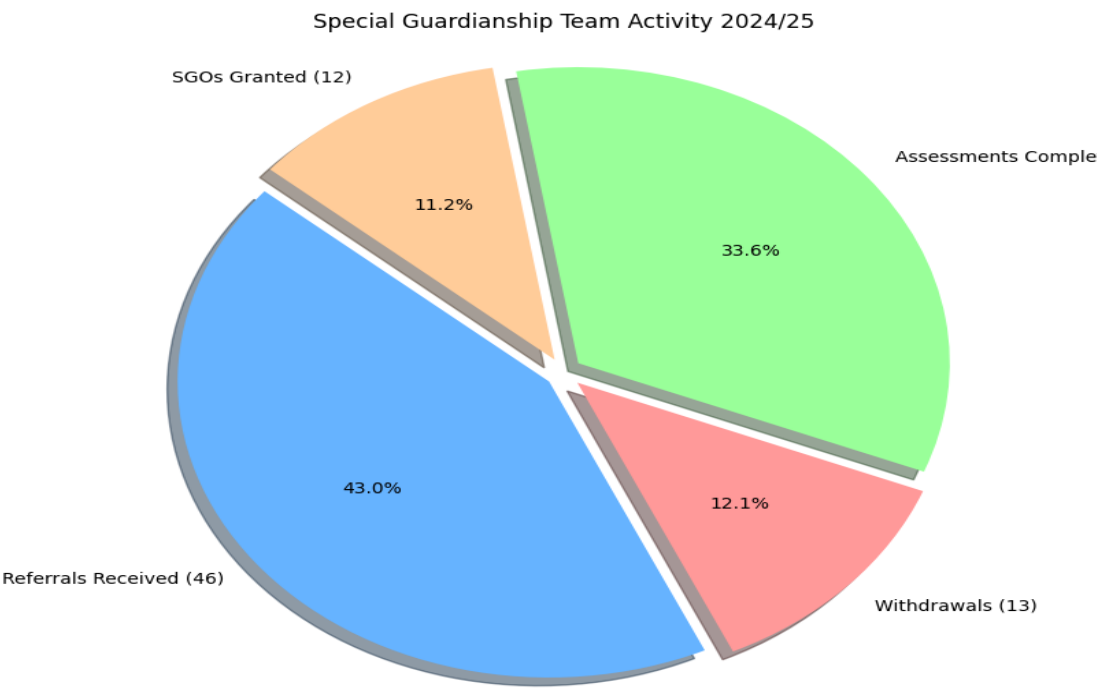
Special Guardianship and Post Order Support Team

The special guardianship team have a focus on assessing kinship and connected carers and supporting Special Guardians. Once assessed, carers are presented to fostering panel who consider recommendations for their approval as connected carers.

Wherever possible, when children cannot be reunified with their parents and where there is a positive assessment - the local authority would support connected foster carers in applying for a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) to secure permanence for the children outside of the local authority care system. This approach aligns with the government's national kinship strategy and children's social care reforms, which

aims to champion kinship care and set out support for family networks providing loving and stable homes for children.

Much has been done to ensure connected carers are presented to panel in a timely manner.



The Special Guardianship Team received 46 referrals in 2024/25. This was a 100% increase on the previous year (2023/24) of 23. There were no recorded withdrawals from a Special Guardianship assessment in 2023/24, however, in 2024/25 there were 13 withdrawals.

The team completed 24 assessments in 2023/24 and 36 assessments in 2024/25. A 50% increase.

There were 12 Special Guardianship Orders granted in Care Proceedings during 2024/2025, 9 of which were court directed. This compares favourably to the previous year when 7 Special Guardianship Orders granted, six of which were court directed through care proceedings.

There were 10 connected carer assessments completed by the team in 2024/25.

There has been an increased emphasis within Haringey Children's Service to keep children within their family and network where possible and safe to do so. This practice is reflected in the increase in assessments being completed and presentations for Fostering Panel of connected carers.

Kinship (Connected Carers)

The Kinship part of the service has a dual role, to assess and support kinship carers as well as to provide on-going support to our special guardians once an order has been granted.

	2023/24	2024/25
Number of referrals received for Special Guardianship and Connected Carers Assessments	23	46
Number of Special Guardianship Assessments completed	14	30
Number of Special Guardianship Orders granted	7	12
Number of Special Guardianship allowances being paid.	No figure	122
Number of Connected Carers Assessments completed	6	9

Kinship Care is unique to local authorities. Within Haringey we have experienced a significant growth in our kinship carers group, year on year. There has been a continued rise in family and friend placements, which has impacted on the service in relation to the following:

- Reduced capacity to complete assessments in-house.
- Where children are placed with carers under a Reg 24 arrangement, carers are approved as connected carers pending the decision of court to grant a Special Guardianship Order.
- This has resource implications through the financial commitments of the service as well as the allocation of a supervising social worker as a statutory obligation for connected carers.

The safeguarding and support teams undertake viability assessments, following which:

- The Special Guardianship Team are alerted to the possibility of a kinship placement at the earliest opportunity
- Support is provided to the safeguarding and support teams as well as the children in care teams to understand the processes involved in Reg 24 placements and the assessment of prospective family members/friends.

- There is a pool of Independent Social Workers (ISW's) that Haringey work closely with for the completion of Special Guardianship Assessments that are overseen and quality assured by the service. This has enabled the service to have better oversight and drive the quality of assessments being completed.

Much work has been done to develop smooth processing of such placements. This includes the development of a process map for staff and delivery of workshops to all social workers across all service areas. This work will continue through 2025/26.

THE FRONT DOOR OF OUR SERVICE – THE RECRUITMENT TEAM

Welcoming – Informative - Efficient

Fostering Recruitment Team Overview – Haringey Council

The Recruitment Team serves as the initial point of contact for individuals interested in fostering, playing a crucial role in attracting and processing public enquiries. They manage communications across multiple channels including phone, email, website, and text, and host regular public events to promote fostering opportunities.

Working in collaboration with the Communications Team, the Recruitment Team Manager develops targeted and cost-effective campaigns aligned with service needs. These campaigns leverage social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, alongside traditional outreach methods like posters, leaflets, banners, radio, and local publications.

The team is committed to delivering a service that is welcoming, efficient, informative, and inclusive—ensuring all enquiries are handled fairly and in line with Haringey Council’s core values and behaviours.

The Recruitment Team consists of:
1 Team Manager
2 Recruitment and Assessment Social Workers
1 Marketing Officer
1 dedicated BSO support.

We are proud members of:



Objectives achieved in 2024/2025

Consistent and regular review and development of the fostering webpages to ensure that information is clear for customers and enables online enquiries to be completed

Monthly review of the effectiveness of the Fostering Service marketing strategy, and changes made as required to achieve the aims of the service

Carefully planned marketing campaigns were delivered. This included hosting 3 Fostering events. A Carer Retention Event, a joint Haringey and Islington Fostering Event and a Fostering Taster Event for Foster Carer Fortnight. In addition, 13 drop-in events were attended where fostering for Haringey was promoted. For example, at community events, libraries, art centres etc. This promoted the fostering service and generated visibility and promoted fostering for Haringey.

Delivered information about foster carers upskilling to become specialist foster carers. including the additional support and training and support package.

We increased our presence on social media to boost the visibility of the fostering service. These efforts led to significant marketing successes: we have reduced graphic/leaflet design turnaround times from an average of 3 weeks to 1 week (a 67% improvement), achieved a 14% growth in social media followers. Furthermore, the service's recruitment efforts have led to a jump in monthly enquiries.

Our marketing campaign and strategy generated 117 fostering enquiries.

5 foster carers were recruited, assessed and approved in 2024/2025. whilst the target of 13 new task centered foster carers, was not achieved in year, 9 task centred foster carers were in stage two of the assessment process meaning approval would be considered in 2025/26.

Recruitment

During 2024/2025 Haringey Fostering and Recruitment Team delivered the marketing and recruitment strategy. The focus was to increase the recruitment and retention of foster carers, thereby increasing the availability of loving and nurturing family homes for children and young people across Haringey.

Haringey is one of the most diverse areas in the country, with communities representing

a wide range of identities, cultures, and abilities. To address the diverse needs of Haringey children requiring foster placements, including long-term and short-term foster carers, as well as those who can support children with additional needs and children in need of remand placements; our marketing and recruitment strategy encouraged foster carer enquiries from all sections of our diverse community.

Marketing

Our new full-time Marketing Officer assumed the role in late November 2024. As part of our strategic objectives, we focused on enhancing the use of internal communication initiatives to promote fostering without incurring council expenses. For example, through internal communications and borough publications. We increased our number of drop-in events and stalls, as well as increasing our presence on social media to boost the visibility of the fostering service.

Imagery

Our marketing campaign selected vibrant and positive imagery of domestic people portraits. A range of images were selected to better reflect Haringey's diverse communities and enable potential foster carers the opportunity to see themselves as foster carers.



Language

Our marketing and promotional language emphasised simple accessibility by avoiding jargon. We introduced fostering concepts and terms in a manner that was clear and easily understood. We communicated positive messages to challenge negative perceptions and stigma around foster care. We communicated the impact fostering can have and how lives have been changed, through myth busting, sharing experiences of our carers and care leavers, as well as providing information about allowances and support.

Enquiries & Approvals

Between 31st of March 2024 and the 1st of April 2025 there were consistent, positive increases in our fostering enquiries, as shown in Fig. 1 below.

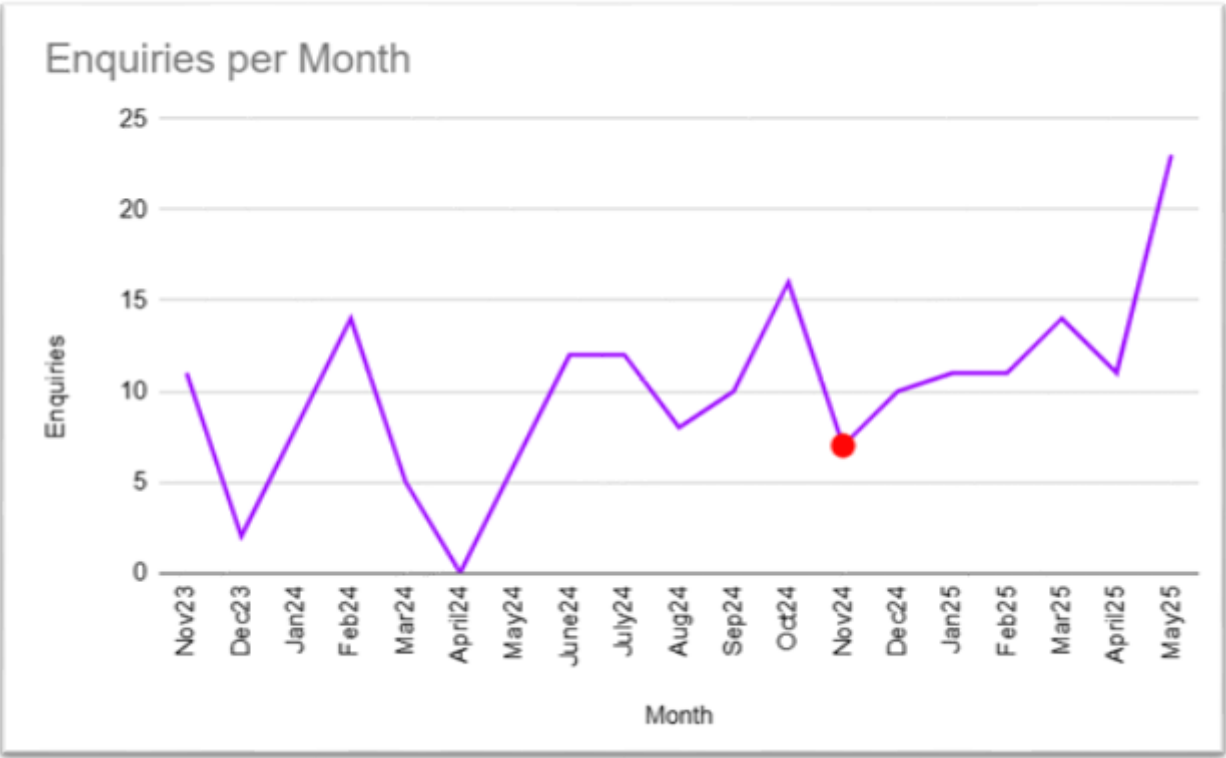


Fig. 1: The red point indicates where our full-time Marketing Officer started in post. From the first full month of work, enquiries consistently rise to 10 or more each month.

Website

Our website (Fig. 3) is a key part of our marketing toolkit. Our page serves as an information hub where residents can learn more about fostering, find out about our recruitment activities, and enquire about becoming a carer with Haringey.



Fig. 3 – Our website landing page as of May 2025.

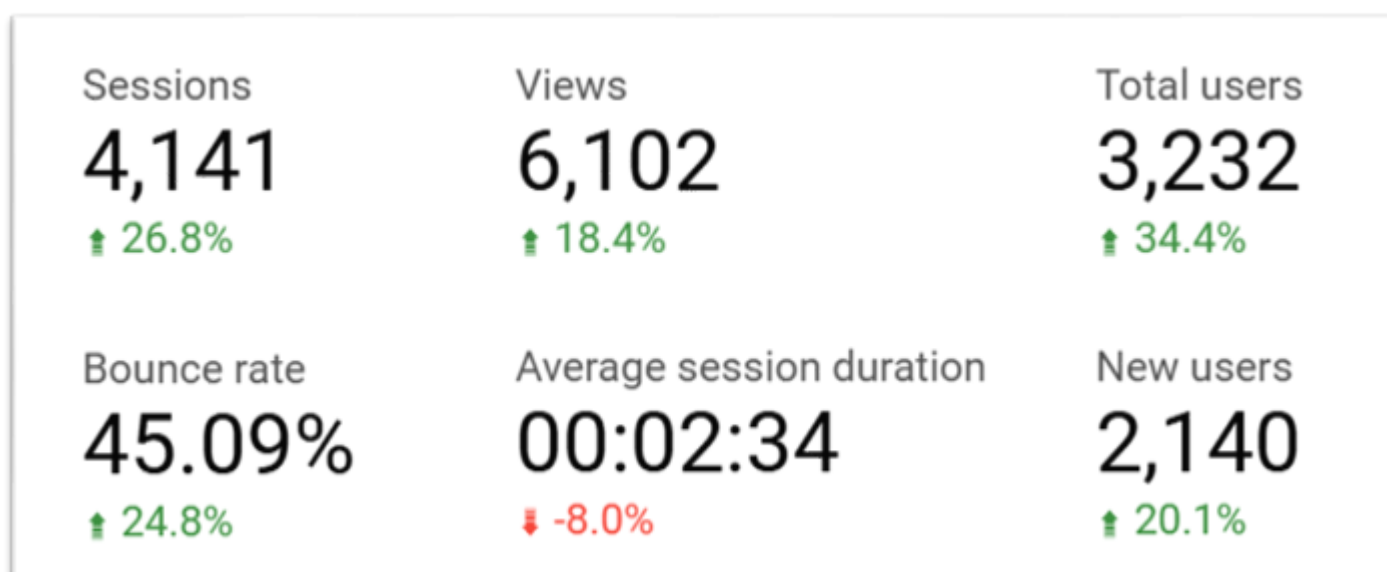


Fig. 4 – Webpage analytics from 1 May 2024-22 May 2025.

In 2024/2025 our total number of page views, users, and sessions went up. We reached more people, with more than 2,100 users visiting our site who had not previously visited before.

However, our 'bounce rate', which calculates how many users do not stay on the page for more than 10 seconds, was also up by 25%--this indicates that whilst a higher number of users are clicking on our webpage, they are not staying on our page, clicking on links, or engaging with our content.

The website refresh provides good groundwork for a more user-focused page. We are now focussing on making our user journey dynamic and seamless to capture those new users and keep their attention. This website refresh is part of a wider business case for digital marketing pending approval.

Social Media

Being active on social media is paramount to connecting with and expanding our fostering community. We have increased our activity on Instagram and are sharing fostering updates via the Council's main Facebook page using the Communications team's Meltwater platform.

Our Instagram post frequency has increased from 21 posts across May 2023-October 2024 to 35 posts from November 2024-May 2025. This is a 67% increase from the previous six months ago.

Our impressions (the number of times content appears on a user screen) increased significantly; impressions measure how often a piece of content appears on a user's screen, regardless of whether they have clicked on the post. Impressions are an important measure of our marketing reach, and our impressions show our posts are reaching a wider

audience.

Our average impression count per post in November 2024 was 56, by May 2025 it had increased to 205. This is an increase of 266%. Our likes are also up, with our average likes per post having increased from 2 to 4, an increase of 100%.

This success is due to a few factors, including the addition of calls to action such as redirecting users to our website or an event ticket management website, as well as the inclusion of colourful and dynamic graphics.

Our marketing strategy uses collaboration on posts with the larger Haringey Council Instagram run by Internal Comms, which gives us access to a much wider audience (at the time of writing, HC's Instagram is at 7,817 followers, compared to 165 followers on our Fostering account)

Furthermore, in March 2025, we successfully organised a fostering giveaway (Fig. 8) at no cost to our service by collaborating with bestselling author and UK foster carer Beth Moran. We reached out to Ms. Moran following an interview she did with BBC Radio 4 about fostering; Beth graciously donated a copy of her latest book (a novel inspired by her fostering journey) to be awarded as the giveaway prize. This initiative not only engaged our community but also showcased the significance of fostering through the support of a prominent cultural figure. This giveaway gave us a follower boost of 14%.

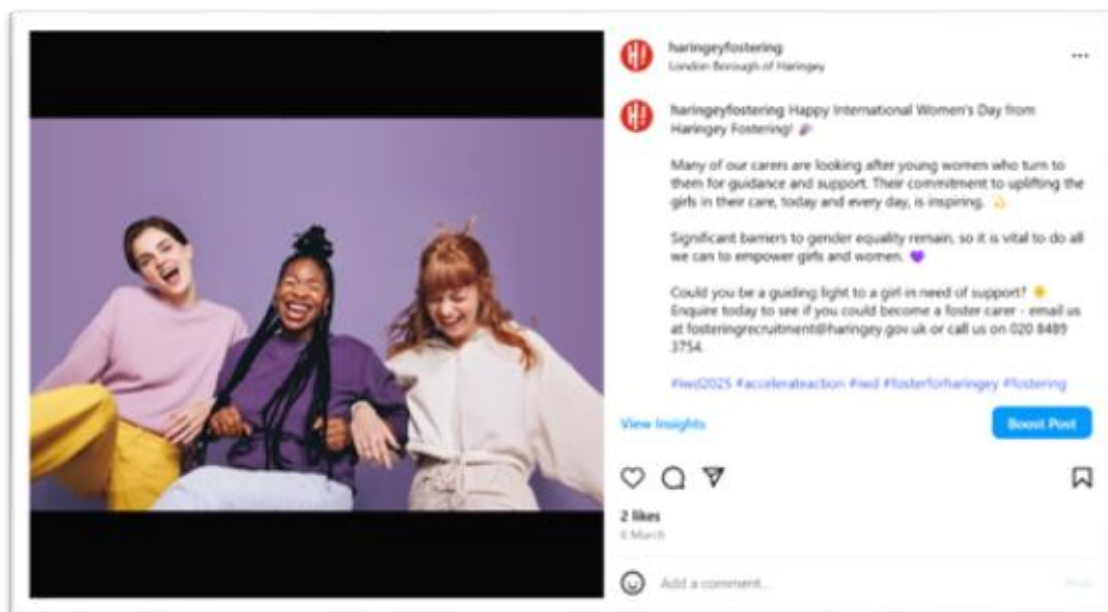


Fig. 5 – A post to our Instagram for International Women's Day (8 March 2025)

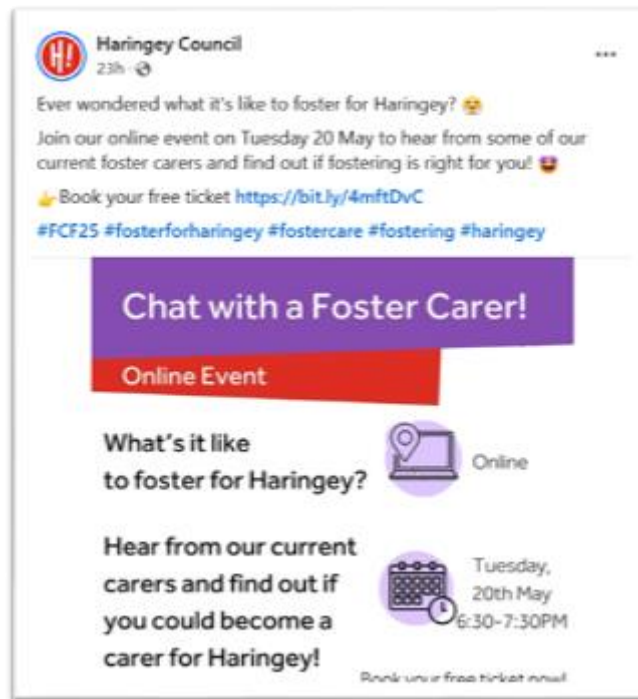


Fig. 6 -- A post to Haringey Council's Facebook via Meltwater, May 2025

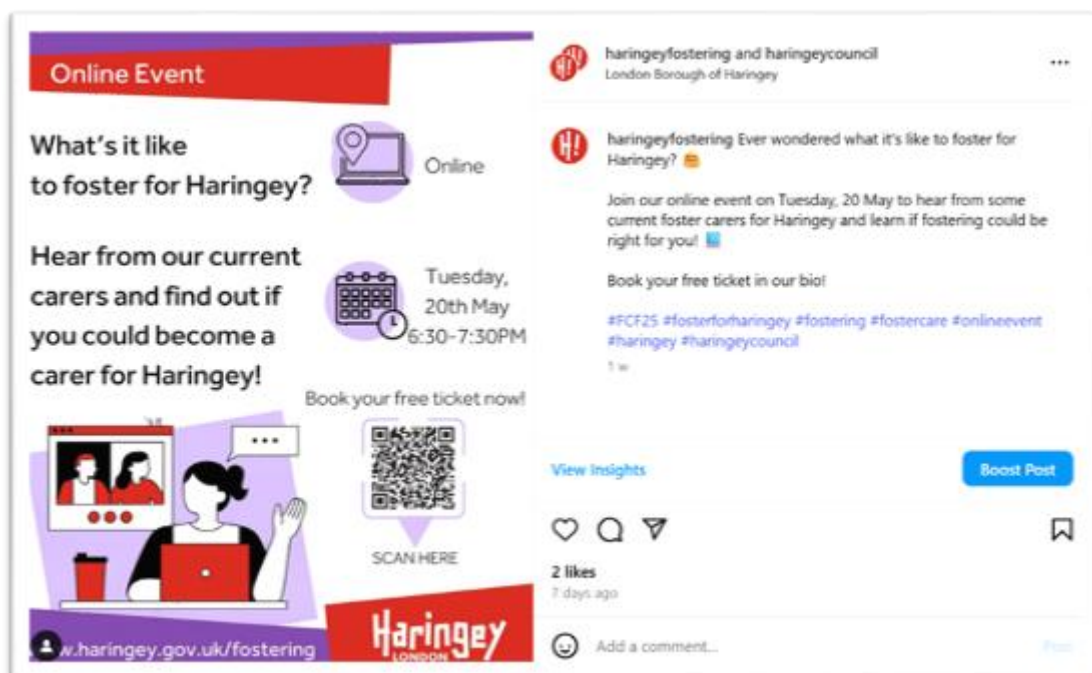


Fig. 7 -- A post to Haringey's Fostering Instagram, May 2025



Fig. 8 -- A giveaway post on Haringey's Fostering Instagram which garnered a record-breaking 38 likes and 1,342 impressions (10 March 2025)

Campaign Promotion

We currently use a combination of direct marketing (banners, merchandise, leaflet handouts, internal newsletters, and targeted external newsletters) as well as digital marketing (social media promotion, Clear Channel ads, Haringey screens) to promote the fostering service and our recruitment activities.

Campaigns

Haringey Fostering Service jointly delivered the Consortium Christmas Campaign. This collaborative campaign with the North London Fostering Consortium used the 12 Days of Christmas to explore a different element of foster care across 12 days in December.

This provided information on the importance of fostering and how to apply to become a foster carer in Haringey. This was promoted digitally on Instagram. We also jointly delivered the Consortium New Year's Campaign in January 2025-New year, new beginnings!

This campaign encouraged residents to make becoming a carer part of their new year resolutions and busted fostering myths. This was also promoted digitally on Instagram.

The campaign "Become a Foster Carer" was also delivered. This was an ongoing campaign and seeks to find task-centred carers in Haringey. This was routinely promoted physically at events such as drop-in sessions, on our fostering stalls, as well as digitally on Instagram, Facebook, Clear Channels, and Haringey Screens.

The Better Together campaign is another ongoing campaign and is a partnership between Haringey Council and Islington Council focused on the recruitment of new emergency and respite carers. We collaborated in March 2025 on an information event and did a joint stall in May 2024 to answer residents' questions about emergency foster care. This is promoted digitally on Instagram, Facebook, Clear Channels, and Haringey Screens, as well as in the Haringey Community Press' external newsletter.

"Do Something Incredible" is an ongoing campaign to recruit foster carers for children with disabilities across the borough. This is promoted physically at events, drop-in sessions, on fostering stalls, and leaflet drops across the borough, as well as in SEND Power Haringey's newsletter.

"Remand Fostering" is an ongoing campaign to recruit foster carers for children who need to stay with a carer whilst they await court dates for alleged criminal offences. This is promoted physically at events, at drop-in sessions, at fostering stalls, and through leaflet drops across the borough.

In-Person Activities

Our in-person activities so far have focused on events we have hosted and events we have attended, as well as drop-in events.

In 2024/2025 the in-person events had varying degrees of success.

Our March Foster Carer Pancake Breakfast served as an opportunity to encourage carers to join our working group, from which we had 1 carer sign up.

Attendance to our March 2025 joint event with Islington brought in an attendance increase of 50% on the total of all joint events with Islington in 2024. However, attendance has not been as high as with our drop-in events or online events, largely due to the limitations of our current advertising capabilities.

Despite robust marketing campaigns using social media promotion, advertising in HPX and external newsletters, Clear Channel and Screen promotion across the borough, Facebook pushes via Meltwater, and appeals to internal staff via Viva Engage, we are simply not getting the attendance numbers we would like to have.

Of attendees at our in-person events in 2024/2025, 66% said they found out about the event via our Clear Channel/Internal Screen campaigns, and 33% found out via our fostering newsletter, thus demonstrating our digital marketing efforts are effective.

We have also linked with Haringey Comms to promote our events via the What's On in Haringey page for greater visibility to boost attendance (see Fig. 9 below).

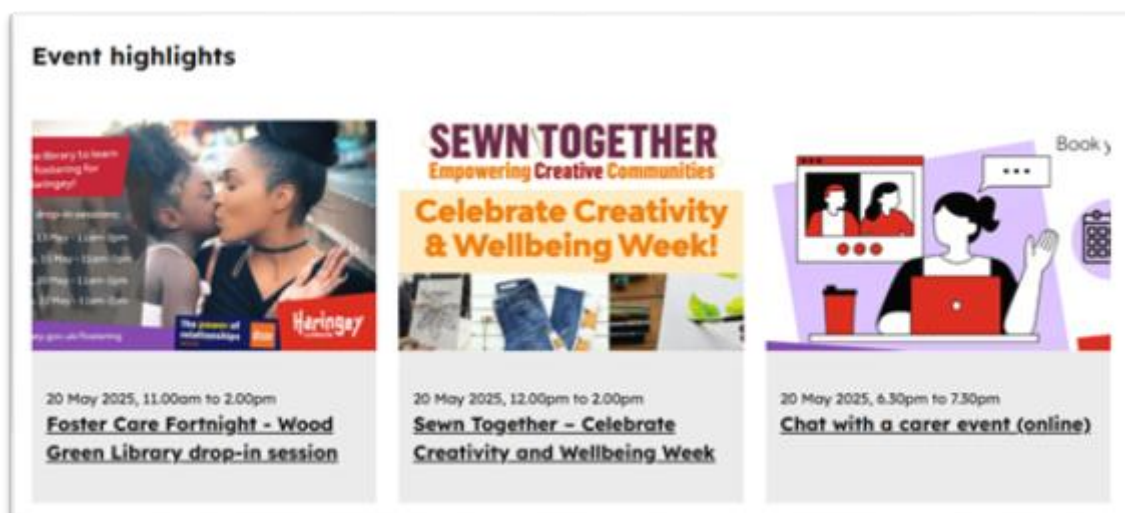


Fig. 9 – Events Highlights page on What's On in Haringey (May 2025)

Drop-In Events

Our drop-in events have had more success than events we host, due to increased foot traffic at public places and flexibility to accommodate various schedules, unlike fixed-time events.

We have attended a variety of drop-in events, from stalls at NHS Wellbeing days to informational drop-ins at Jackson's Lane Art Centre, North Middlesex Hospital, GP offices, Winkfield Resource Centre, Wood Green Shopping Centre, Wood Green Library, Stroud Green Library, and drop-ins to encourage discussion with our Haredi Jewish community.

Within a 6 month period (November 2024-March 2025), we amassed 44 enquiries from drop-ins alone, which account for more than half (52%) of our total enquiries in the same 6 month period.

Online Events

Our fostering website contains information about online sessions with ticket links. We also promote our Online Sessions via social media and Clear Channel/Haringey Screens.

We also created an Online Fostering Information Session PowerPoint to use as a visual aid during online sessions, which has helped attendees better understand the fostering application process.

As shown in the chart below (Fig. 10), we have seen a significant increase in public interest in our online events since implementing this promotional strategy in February 2025. Between February 2025 to May 2025 across 3 online sessions, 3 enquiries were generated.

Fostering Info Sessions



Fig. 10 – Fostering Info Session Data (Dec 23-April 25)



Fig. 11 – An example of our ticket booking page for Online Fostering Info Sessions



Fig. 12 – Online Session Webpage Box

Our Social Workers also report a keen interest from our foster carers towards their own online support group option, with one Social Worker feeding back: 'the evening group is now a large group as it is convenient for lots of people with up to 30 to 40 people attending'.

We have found that online events are growing more popular with both internal and external fostering audiences.

Newsletter

We have also increased consistency on our monthly fostering newsletter, now ensuring they are sent out monthly, rather than bi-monthly. We have also attended multiple foster carer support groups to get direct feedback from the carers as to what they would like to see in the newsletter. Moreover, we liaised with internal comms to streamline the newsletter design in December 2025, creating uniformity in the design.

Carer feedback led to the implementation of the following sections of our newsletter:

Tier Refresher

Monthly Fostering stories from our carers—these have proved especially popular, and we have received feedback that the carers featured are very pleased and proud to have their accomplishments showcased to their fellow carers. We will be building on this success, by exploring a wider distribution of these stories.

Awareness raising regarding Private Fostering

Working Group Recruitment Information—this has led to the recruitment of 6 carers to our working group

Overall, the total number of 'opens' from newsletter recipients has increased by 20%.



Fig. 13 – Fostering Newsletter Header (April 2025)

Our Plans for 2025/2026

- To review and develop the fostering webpages to ensure that information is clear for customers and enables online enquiries to be completed
- To review the effectiveness of Marketing Strategy and make changes as required to achieve the aims of the service
- To undertake carefully planned marketing campaigns
- To host and attend community events to promote the fostering service and generate visibility and promote fostering in Haringey.
- To ensure that current foster carers are well supported and trained to ensure retention of active carers in the borough, as well as encouraging carers to upskill to become specialist carers
- To increase our annual enquiries to 120/per year
- We aim to have a minimum of 13 new task-centred carers approved by the end of this year 2025-26, and 2+ specialist carers

The Assessment Team

We have dedicated Social Workers that are committed and focused solely on the recruitment process of new foster carers, including the delivery of marketing campaigns. The team is made up of experienced, flexible, enthusiastic and competent social workers.

The team undertake:

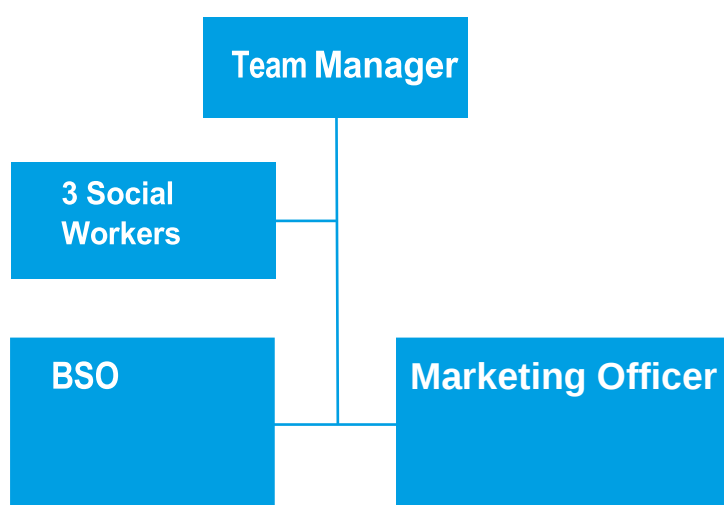
Mainstream Fostering Assessments

Connected Carers Assessments

Leading on the delivery of Skills to Foster Training

Involvement in the delivery and facilitation of various marketing campaigns.

Assessment Team Staff Structure:



Assessment Team Update:

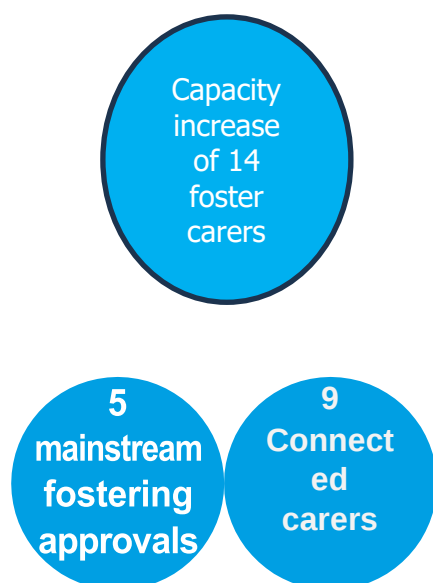
The Assessment Team have two Social Work assessors dedicated to completing Form F assessments which facilitates the recruitment of new task centred foster carers. There is a Senior Practitioner dedicated to the monitoring and progression of connected carer assessments and the completion of Special Guardianship assessments completed by Independent Social Workers.

In the Assessment Team, the two-stage process of fostering assessments are merged – meaning that all assessments could be considered 'fast tracked'. This has benefits for our applicants, who, after deciding they would like to foster, want to be approved as quickly as possible and for the service, as we have approved carers ready to take placements of children in far shorter timescales than previously achieved. This has been achieved through the implementation of running stage 1 and stage 2 of the assessment process concurrently to prevent any delay with checks being received in a timely manner.

The aim has been to reduce the timescales for completion of fostering assessments from 12 months to 4.5 – 6 months. All cases are booked onto the Fostering Panel on allocation,

with 4.5 – 5 months being allowed for completion of the assessment. The Assessment Team in 2024/25 averaged 6.5 months per assessment. On consideration of those cases which took longer than our 4.5 – 6-month goal, there were justifiable reasons for delay, as opposed to there being drift e.g. additional work identified with birth children in assessment / applicants having to take time out for personal matters or issues with statutory checks being returned.

Approvals 2024/2025:



The Assessment Team had a target of assessing and approving 20 task centred foster carers. The Assessment Team did not meet the target of recruiting 20 new carers, but did have 9 active assessments in stage two in preparation for presentation to Panel by 31st March 2025 and 5 applicants had paused their Form F assessments for varying personal reasons. All but 1 sought to resume their assessment within the following 6 months. These factors impacted on the approval target being reached in 2024/2025.

One household withdrew from the assessment process for unavoidable personal reasons.

In all, this highlights the quality of the screening process of our enquiries, further supported through initial visits to potential applicants yielding a good result.

The Fostering Service target of increased placement capacity of 35 was exceeded through a range of different placements being confirmed. This was achieved in partnership with the Fostering Support team. Through this approach the Fostering Service were able to increase placements capacity through developing a broader pool of nine Regulation 24 carers and we considered our current carers and looked at ways in which they could be supported to increase their approval numbers. This is significant progress and a positive

step forward in growing our cohort of carers, keeping children local and, ultimately, making savings for the Local Authority by reducing reliance on independent fostering agencies.

There were 9 connected carer assessments completed by the team in 2024/25. There has been an increased emphasis within Haringey Children's Service to keep children within their family and network where possible and safe to do so. This practice is reflected in the increase in assessments being completed and, presentation for Fostering Panel of connected carers.

Skills to Foster Training



The Recruitment and Assessment Team deliver the skills to foster training. This is co-delivered with staff from the Fostering Support Teams, Foster Carers and Care experienced Young Adults. This joint working has enhanced the content and delivery of the Skills to Foster training. The Consortium alternate delivering the training and so Haringey Assessment Team will also deliver Skills to Foster training to applicants from neighbouring boroughs.

Haringey Fostering Support Teams: Empowering Foster Carers

- Haringey have two dedicated Fostering Teams, each with a Team Manager and 5 Supervising Social Workers who provide the day to day support and supervision to our foster carers and connected carers.
- Monthly support groups are offered to carers who can attend either virtually or in person. Support groups are facilitated by supervising social workers and are aimed at providing a safe space for carers to gather and learn from each other. This space also offers themed workshops and guest speakers to support the learning and development of our carers.

Psychological & Emotional Support

- **First Steps Plus:** Offers psychological health screening and one-to-one consultations for children aged 0–17 at risk of placement instability, within a 20-mile radius of Haringey. First Steps Plus also work directly with our carers to provide them with support in managing complex situations.

Peer Support & Mentoring

- Experienced carers provide outreach and respite support.
- New carers are paired with seasoned carers for guidance and encouragement.
- Carers have a WhatsApp group where they can reach out for support from other carers within the service

The Mockingbird Project

- The model consists of a constellation of 10 fostering families supported by a hub home carer.
- Offers sleepovers, peer support, training, and social activities.
- Promotes placement stability and a sense of community.
- A Liaison Officer bridges Haringey Fostering Service and The Fostering Network.

Multi-Agency Collaboration

- Close work with Children in Care Team, Exploitation Team, Young Adult Service, Health, and Education.
- Foster carers and social workers participate in multidisciplinary planning meetings.
- Work closely with Adopt London North to support children and their carers through the transition period for adoption.

Training & Development

Our current training offer ranges from online to face-to-face training opportunities covering a wide range of topics to aid development throughout a Foster Carers career. There is particular emphasis on training around trauma informed practice and to support carers to provide loving homes for children with more complex needs. Supervising Social Workers provide support to our carers to learn creatively and understand differing learning styles. This informs the agreed yearly individualised learning and development plan for each foster carer. We also welcome Special Guardians onto training detailed within our training brochure.

- Annual training brochure updates to reflect evolving needs. The training offer in Haringey is vast to suit the varying learning styles of our carers including generic to more targeted themes.
- Training includes trauma-informed practice and support for complex needs.

- Individualised learning plans tailored to each carer's style and goals. This is kept under review by the supervising social worker to ensure that carers have completed all mandatory training as well as other identified areas for their learning and development.

24/7 Support Access

- Out-of-hours support available every day from supervising social workers within the service:
 - Weekdays: 6pm–11pm
 - Weekends/Holidays: 10am–11pm
- Daytime support via Supervising Social Workers or Duty Team.
- Emergency Duty Team available at all other times.

Foster Carer Retention in Haringey

In Haringey we recognise the importance of retaining our foster carers and work hard to ensure they are valued and feel part of the service.

Celebrating Long-Term Commitment

- **57 carers** have fostered for Haringey for over 10 years.
- **15 carers** have fostered for over 20 years.
- Long service awards recognise and celebrate these milestones.

Demographic Challenges

- A significant proportion of our foster carers are aged over 60.
- Many are considering retirement or pausing due to health needs.
- Rising cost of living affects fostering capacity, especially when adult children return home.

Recruitment Pressures

- Without proactive steps being taken to address the Resignations may outpace new approvals in coming years. We have a clear and concise Marketing Strategy to support with the recruitment of new foster carers.
- Marketing and Recruitment Strategy targets:
 - To increase placement capacity.
 - Skilled foster carers to provide homes to children where there may be more complexities.
 - Diverse backgrounds to meet the needs and support appropriate matching of our children in care.

Valuing Foster Carers

- Acknowledges fostering as both rewarding and demanding. We have events to bring our carers together and give recognition to their hard work and commitment, through appreciation events.
- Emphasises the importance of carers feeling **valued, supported, and equipped**.
- Involving our carers through bi-monthly meetings to hear their voices and involve them service delivery.

Financial Recognition

- 2023 uplift in allowances for carers of children aged 11–18. This has ensured that Haringey's fostering allowances are in line with our neighbouring authorities.
- Tiered payment system (Tier 1–3) based on experience and complexity of care. This systems allows for financial reward in line with the foster carers professional development.
- Discretionary payments available for high-needs placements.

Consistent Support

- Each carer has an allocated Supervising Social Worker. The Supervising Social Worker will visit their carers at a minimum of every 6 weeks, or sooner if needed.
- Staffed by permanent, experienced professionals, meaning that Supervising Social Workers know their carers well and in some cases have been working with their carers for a number of years. Carers report that they have good relationships with their Supervising Social Workers and feel well supported.

Trauma-Informed Practice

- Carers trained in the **Secure Base Model**:
 - Builds resilience and equips our carers to work with and care for children through a trauma informed lens.
 - Enhances understanding of trauma and behaviour and equipes carers to use various methods to support children to overcome challenges.
 - Supports reflective practice and growth.

Community & Connection

- **Annual Picnic in the Park**: fosters community and fun for carers and children.
- **Men's Group**: dedicated space for male foster carers to share, learn, and support each other.
- **Monthly Support Groups**:
 - Daytime (face-to-face)
 - Evening (virtual)

- Includes guest speakers and training opportunities

Expanding the Mockingbird Project

- We currently have one active constellation with 10 families. This includes a Hub Carer that offers support in various way to other fostering households within the consortium.
- Plans underway to launch a **second constellation**, extending the support network.

Independent Reviewing Officers in Haringey Fostering Service

The Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) play a pivotal role in ensuring the quality, stability, and compliance of foster care within Haringey Fostering Service. Their work supports both foster carers and children in care through rigorous review processes and child-centered approaches.

Stability and Continuity

Haringey employs one full-time and one part-time IRO; both permanent staff members. This arrangement fosters continuity and strong professional relationships, which are essential for meaningful and reflective annual reviews of foster carers.

Annual Review Performance

In the 2024/2025 period, IROs completed **98** Foster Carer Annual Reviews, with around 90% completed on time. Delays were primarily due to carer availability issues such as illness or travel, ongoing investigations related to allegations, and cases involving resignations or pending deregistration.

Quality Assurance and Regulatory Oversight

IROs ensure that foster carers maintain high standards of care and comply with regulatory requirements. Foster carers are reviewed and return to the Fostering Panel every three years, as recommended by the IROs, to maintain ongoing approval and quality assurance.

Secure Base Model Integration

The review process incorporates the Secure Base Model, assessing foster care across five key domains: sensitivity, availability, acceptance, cooperation, and family membership. This framework promotes trauma-informed practice and supports the development of foster carers in providing nurturing and secure environments.

Holistic Feedback and Child Voice

IROs actively gather feedback from multiple sources, including foster carers' birth children, children in care, social workers, and support staff. The wishes and feelings of children are central to the review process, ensuring their voices influence care planning and support.

Celebrating Commitment

IRO reviews highlight the dedication and commitment of Haringey's foster carers. Through their efforts, children benefit from safe, nurturing homes and enriching experiences that contribute to their well-being and development.

This section provides a comprehensive overview suitable for inclusion in reports to stakeholders, demonstrating the critical role of IROs in maintaining and enhancing foster care quality within Haringey.

Haringey Fostering Panel

The role of a fostering panel is to **recommend whether someone is suitable to become (or remain) a foster carer**. Every fostering service must set up at least one fostering panel. This should include a range of people with relevant knowledge and experience.

Haringey Fostering Panel Composition

15 members on the central list:

- 1 Independent Chair
- 1 Independent Vice Chair
- 6 Agency Social Workers (including 2 IROs)
- 1 Local Authority Councillor
- 6 Independent Members (including foster carers, Special Guardian, psychotherapist, former disabilities manager, and care-experienced member)

Support Roles

- Panel Advisor: Ensures report quality and regulatory compliance.
- Panel Administrator: Manages logistics and produces detailed minutes.

Panel Functions

- Approving foster and kinship carers (initial, temporary, and continued approval)
- Reviewing carers post-allegation or standard of care concerns
- Conducting first and third annual reviews
- Quality assurance and recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM)

- resignations/de-registrations

Panel Operations

- Held virtually twice a month, improving accessibility for carers.
- Each panel includes six members, ensuring diversity in skills and backgrounds.
- Two members resigned in 2024/25; recruitment for replacements is underway.

Appraisals & Training

- Appraisals held in Feb 2025: Members expressed commitment and valued their role.
- Training priorities: LGBTQ+ and transgender awareness, sensitive questioning.
- Mandatory training in Sept 2025: Topics include Form K, Corporate Parenting, and effective questioning.

Panel Activity (April 2024 – March 2025)

- 21 meetings held (3 cancelled due to rescheduling needs)
- 66 cases heard, including:

Type of case heard	Number
Connected Carers approval	9
Foster Carer approval	7
Regulation 25 extension	15
Return to panel following allegations	0
Standards of Care	1
1 st Annual Review	5
3 rd Annual Review	9
Change of approval	2
Long Term Match to IFA	3
Long Term Match to in-house carer	7
Resignation	9
Deferral	1

Fostering Matches – Long-Term Matching Panel Overview (2024/2025)

In Haringey, while long-term fostering matches are not mandated under fostering regulations, it is considered best practice to present these matches to the fostering panel. This approach has been positively received, with panel members valuing the opportunity to meet children and hear directly from them. Feedback has consistently highlighted the importance of permanency in fostering, offering children a sense of belonging and stability.

Key Highlights:

- **Children Presented:** 10 children were referred to the panel for long-term matching in 2024/2025, a decrease from 16 in 2023/2024 (↓37%).
- **Panel Recommendations:** All 10 matches were recommended by the panel.
 - **Haringey Carers:** 7 children, including one sibling group of 2.
 - **Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA):** 3 children, including one sibling group of 2.
- **ADM Ratification:** All panel recommendations were ratified by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

Fostering and Kinship Households – 1st and 3rd Year Reviews (2024/2025)

Regulatory Context:

- **1st Year Reviews** are a statutory requirement and must be presented to the fostering panel to confirm continued approval.
- **3rd Year Reviews** are not mandatory but are considered best practice. Haringey has adopted this approach to ensure panel oversight of carers' ongoing suitability and support needs.

Panel Observations:

- **Training:** Attendance sometimes falls short of the required 30 hours/year. Action plans with timescales are now required to address gaps.
- **TSDS Completion:** Panel recommends improvement in timely completion of the Training Support and Development Standards.
- **Record-Keeping:** Carers use varied methods (e.g., diaries, phones, printed templates). Panel recommends a clear plan to support transition to an electronic recording system.

Reg. 25 Extension of Kinship Carers temporary approval Kinship Carers extension requests

Kinship Carer assessments must be completed and ratified within 16 weeks otherwise temporary approval ends, and the placement becomes unlawful.

In exceptional circumstances, an additional 8-weeks extension can be granted under Regulation 25, Care Planning & Placement Review (2010) to ensure the placement remains lawful while the assessment is completed. Reg. 25 extension requests are usually made when there is a delay in the return of necessary DBS/medical checks or other factors impacting on completion of the assessment. However, requests are also sometimes made

to ensure a placement remains lawful while waiting for an imminent Court date to obtain a Special Guardianship Order.

It is noted that social workers are presenting these requests to panel in a timely manner to prevent placements becoming unlawful. Efforts are also being made at an earlier stage to ensure kinship carers have the necessary paperwork required, to prevent delays in the processing of compliance checks such as DBS (Police) checks.

Return to Panel Following Standards of Care or Allegation

Panel Returns Overview

Category	2023/24	2024/25
Standards of Care	1	1
Allegations	4	0

In **2024/2025**, **1 foster carer** was returned to panel due to a **Standards of Care** concern.

- **No returns** were made due to allegations during this period, marking a positive shift from the previous year.

Resignations and Termination of Approval

Resignations and De-registrations

Category	2023/24	2024/25
Resignations	11	7
Transfer	0	2
De-registrations	1	0

7 resignations were acknowledged by panel in 2024/2025:

- **2** carers transferred to other local authorities.
- **2** retired due to personal or family health issues.
- **3** resigned after children in their care reached independence.
 - Notably, one foster carer supported a child for **10 years**, retiring only after the child reached adulthood.
 - Another transitioned from fostering to offer **Shared Lives support** following a **Staying Put arrangement**.

Fostering Panel's role in Quality Assurance

Quarterly quality assurance meetings with senior management and team managers continues to work well. Through this mechanism, discussions take place to address practice ranging from the quality of reports, training plans, timeliness of checks and any other panel issues identified. It also provides an opportunity for relevant local and national updates to be discussed.

Comments from our carers on the panel process:

- I am glad the members of Panel were amazing. They welcomed me in such a warm and positive way with smile on their faces makes me feel appreciated and welcomed and also made me instantly happy and helped me to calm down my worries.

- Ah! It was a rigorous experience. One doesn't want to have this too often. The process was thorough while feeling quite comfortable.

- I was very nervous to start with. My nerves settled as the panel meeting went on. I was put at ease by the chair. I was very surprised to get approval today. Thank you.

- We thought it was a good experience.... Everyone was polite and we understood what was asked of us, thank you so much.

- It was an experience for me after 20 years of being foster carer.

- The meeting was set up really well, it felt professional and well led. We appreciated the time to suit us with our children and the advance notice of when it would take place.

- Communications were clear and precise.

The feedback from social workers and team managers on their panel experience was also very positive. All 36 received invitations between 5 -14 days of panel. 27 felt they had prepared their Carers for panel and 30 felt their Carers had an 'Excellent' experience, while 6 described it as 'Very Good'. Of the 36, 27 felt difference and diversity was addressed 'Very well, and 9 'Well'. All social workers felt they were treated with respect, and 32 described their overall view attending panel as 'Excellent' and 4 'Very good'.

Areas for development identified by the Fostering Panel:

- DBS and medical checks for kinship care assessments should be completed in a timely manner to ensure assessments are presented within the 16-week timescale.
- All Learning & Development Plans should be fully completed with dates training was attended and learning outcomes in relation to the child/ren in placement.

- Children's social workers must provide requested written feedback for all Carers' annual reviews, including feedback on children that have left the placement within the reviewing period.
- A plan with timescales to support all Carers transition to the local authority's chosen method of record keeping needs to be progressed.

Complaints and Allegations

The Fostering Service continues to offer multiple avenues for carers to raise and resolve concerns. Regular bi-monthly meetings between the Fostering Service Manager, Team Managers, and Foster Carers provide a structured forum for open discussion. Additionally, the Service Manager remains accessible to meet with carers individually or in groups, ensuring that all voices are heard and issues are addressed promptly.

In the 2024/2025 period, the service responded to **three formal complaints**, all of which were managed in line with our procedures and commitment to continuous improvement.

Quality Assurance

Within our Fostering Service, we are committed to achieving excellence across all areas of our work. We have enhanced our review documentation to gather more meaningful feedback and will continue to refine these tools to support ongoing improvement.

We actively seek evidence of our impact, capturing feedback at every opportunity to inform and shape our practice. Every six weeks, we hold Service Meetings that bring the entire team together to reflect on achievements, share learning, and evaluate the effectiveness of our work. In addition, fortnightly managers' meetings provide a space to discuss performance, service developments, learning opportunities, and examples of good practice.

Team Managers produce monthly reports that highlight team performance, emerging themes from supervision, and insights gained through management oversight. These reports often lead to targeted action plans for teams or individual staff members, which are then reviewed in wider management meetings to identify trends, share good practice, and determine whether broader service-level actions are required.

We have implemented clear and simple methods for teams to demonstrate how they are embedding the Secure Base model into their practice.

Audits play a central role in our Quality Assurance Strategy. They help identify key areas for development and are used to drive improvements across the service. Findings from audits are shared with teams, accompanied by timelines for implementing improvements. This process ensures that management oversight remains effective and that practice is consistently raised across the department.

Our Plans for 2025/2026

The needs of children entering care continue to grow in complexity, and Haringey recognises the importance of recruiting and developing foster carers to meet these evolving demands. We remain committed to a multi-agency approach, ensuring that young people and their carers receive the right support and resources.

Expanding Placement Capacity

We are actively working to increase our ability to meet the placement needs of looked after children through our in-house foster carers. This will be achieved by:

- Expanding placement capacity within our current cohort.
- Up-skilling foster carers to support children with more complex needs.
- Targeted recruitment of specialist carers with relevant experience.

Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Our recruitment efforts will continue to utilise:

- Online and print media.
- Local media outlets.
- Social media platforms.

We aim to attract professionals with transferable skills by promoting fostering opportunities through organisational communication channels. A key initiative will be the launch of our **"Do Something Incredible"** campaign, focused on recruiting carers for children with disabilities.

Retention remains a priority. We offer:

- A comprehensive training programme via our fostering services training brochure.
- Access to over 100 online training topics.
- Bespoke training tailored to carers' and children's needs.

Training will support carers in areas such as:

- Complex emotional and behavioural needs.
- Parent and child placements.
- Remand placements.
- High-level care for children with disabilities.

We also support carers in evidencing their learning through creative approaches, including literature, podcasts, and television series.

Service Development Priorities

- **Foster Carer Profiles and Chronologies:** This remains a key area for

development. A clear strategy for implementation, tracking, and monitoring is in place, with the goal of all profiles and chronologies being up to date by **March 2026**.

- **Feedback and Audits:** A satisfaction survey rolled out in January 2023 received a 33% response rate. Key findings included:
 - 69% felt well supported by their Supervising Social Worker.
 - 69% expressed dissatisfaction with allowance rates.

In response, allowances for carers of children over 11 were increased to align with neighbouring boroughs.

Although a formal survey was not conducted in 2024/2025, bi-monthly meetings with carers provided valuable feedback and supported timely responses to concerns. A new satisfaction survey will be launched shortly, with findings to be included in the next annual report.

Audit activity will resume in 2025/2026, with a renewed focus on service improvement.

Placement Utilisation

Efforts are underway to improve the utilisation of fostering households. This includes presenting carers for de-registration where appropriate, ensuring that available placements are used effectively and that the fostering service remains responsive to current needs.

Forthcoming Year Priorities – Fostering Service

<i>Priority Area</i>	<i>Description</i>
Increase Placement Capacity	Expand fostering capacity by 30 additional placements.
Foster Carer Recruitment	- Approve a minimum of 13 task-centred foster carers. - Recruit at least 3 specialist foster carers to meet the complex needs of looked-after children. - Continue targeted marketing to attract carers with the skills required to support diverse and specialist placements for children.
Foster Carer Deregistration	Efficiently process the deregistration of carers who are no longer active.
Carer Development and Support	- Support existing carers to develop skills for caring for children with complex needs. - Ensure all foster carers have up-to-date profiles and completed learning and development plans, including training dates and outcomes linked to children in placement. - Promote the transition to digital daily logs for all Haringey foster carers.
Kinship Care Assessment Timeliness	- Complete all Regulation 24 kinship care assessments within 16 weeks. - Only seek Regulation 25 extensions where unavoidable.

	- Closely monitor and track assessment progress to reduce the risk of placements becoming unregulated - Ensure timely initiation and completion of DBS and medical checks for kinship and approved carers.
Case File Management	- Maintain consistent and up-to-date chronologies on all carer files, reviewed at least every three months. - Update carer case file summaries quarterly with relevant and current information.
Looked After Child Reviews	Ensure foster carers consistently produce Looked After Child letters for CIC reviews.

A Final Word from the Interim Service Manager, Marsha Smith

I am proud to say that Haringey Fostering Service has been a foundational part of my social work journey, beginning in 2001 when I spent eight years as an Assessment and Supervising Social Worker. Returning to the service in February 2025 and stepping into the Interim Service Manager role in June 2025 has been a full-circle moment. It has been heartening to see many foster carers still committed to caring for Haringey children, alongside newer carers who have joined us in providing loving and nurturing homes.

I have witnessed, and am proud to be part of, a Fostering Service where both carers and staff embody the Haringey Council Values — caring, collaboration, courage, creativity, and community focus. These values are evident throughout our service, from initial recruitment and marketing to post-order support.

We have cultivated a strong Fostering Family, reflected in our daily practice — from responding to enquiries and conducting timely visits, to supporting applicants through the approval process and beyond. Our collective efforts have led to many successes this year, and while we celebrate these achievements, we remain focused on continuous improvement.

Placement stability is a key strength of our service, supported by initiatives such as the Mockingbird Project. Our team works proactively to minimise disruption, with flexible staff who provide timely and tailored support.

Our recruitment team has embraced Secure Base training, using this learning to develop a child-focused assessment tool that evaluates applicants' ability to meet all domains of the Secure Base model. Moving forward, our assessment team will continue to embed this model from the earliest stages of the fostering journey.

Our objective for 2025/2026 is to evolve creatively, ensuring the needs of our looked after children remain central to our work while continuing to support our foster carers. We are committed to maintaining manageable caseloads so that our social workers can deliver the right support at the right time — and we will keep our aspirations high.

I am incredibly proud of our foster carers, our staff, and the tenacity of our Team Managers, who consistently go the extra mile to make a difference.