

Hammersmith and Fulham Children's Social Care Teams

Contact and Assessment

The contact and assessment service is the first point of contact for children needing social care services. The service screens referrals and decides on the course of action, which could range from immediate intervention to protect a child, a referral to another agency, or provision of information or advice. The teams provide short-term support but if medium or long-term social work involvement is needed, a referral is made to the appropriate service.

It can be challenging work, but it's also very enjoyable, varied and allows the opportunity to experiencing a range of work in both child protection and children in need.

Family Support and Child Protection

The family support and child protection teams work in partnership with parents and carers, to improve the life chances of children in need, by protecting children from harm and preventing family breakdown. The teams work closely with other agencies, including health, education and the police, to ensure that children in need of protection are monitored and their families and carers supported in providing safe care, so that, wherever possible, the children can remain with their birth families. The work is challenging, and includes a high proportion of child protection and court work.

The service also covers the **Assessment Service**, for community parenting assessments, and the **Contact Service**, which facilitates supervised contact for looked after children. The contact service provides a safe venue and skilled, experienced supervisors.

Disabilities Service

The service provides a full range of social work services to disabled children and their families. Several recent projects have boosted the service, enabling it to improve the quality and range of provision. These include a new hydrotherapy pool and a sessional carers team for the provision of short breaks.

Here, social workers cover the whole range of social work tasks, working with children in need, those in need of protection and children who are looked after. While workers do carry out statutory work their main tasks involve assessing families and arranging the provision of care packages, short breaks or respite carers.

The Haven respite centre is our overnight short breaks facility. It provides residential and day care breaks for disabled children and/or children with complex medical and behavioural needs.

The Shared Care Service provides a family link and befriending service for disabled children and their families. Carers provide either daytime or overnight care in their own homes, or befriending in the community, allowing parents of disabled children to have a break or spend time with their other children.

Fostering Service

The fostering service focuses on the publicity, recruitment and assessment of new foster carers, supervising approved foster carers, and providing support, guidance and monitoring.

Scheme foster carers are those who provide temporary care to looked after children. Supervising social workers manage these carers to assist them in providing child-focused foster care and encourage the carers' ongoing professional development.

Adoption, Kinship and Post Permanency Service

The adoption, kinship and post permanency services are responsible for assessing prospective adopters and kinship carers for special guardianship arrangements, matching carers with children, and presenting cases for approval by a panel. The service also supports

prospective adopters during the assessment period and provides post-adoption support to ensure the placement can settle successfully.

The service aims to find permanent placements for children and young people, within their extended families or with adoptive ones; to provide a stable, nurturing environment where they can develop and thrive, when this is not possible within their birth families.

Looked After Children and Leaving Care Service

These teams work with all children who are likely to require a permanent placement away from their birth parents, and also support those young people in care in preparing to leave the care system and make the transition into adulthood.

Looked After Children social workers establish a care plan for each child, identify the best long-term permanent placement, and monitor placements, supporting children and carers. The Looked After Children Teams incorporate support to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

The Leaving Care Team aims to ensure a successful transition to adulthood and to provide accessible and consistent 'after care' support. The service works closely with other agencies to provide a range of services, such as housing department and other local housing providers to deliver appropriate accommodation, and a range of educational resources, to support the provision of education and training. The work is challenging as many of the young people have complex backgrounds, have been unable to settle in alternative permanent families and may have be at risk of issues involving drugs, gangs or crime, or teenage pregnancy.

The Family Support Localities Service

This is a newly created service resulting from combining all the preventative services into one and then dividing it into three geographically defined teams. The teams, North, South and Central, are identically configured to provide local support to vulnerable families, children and young people. This makes it easier for families to get early assistance and by being based within their community, workers have a better knowledge of the local area and can make better connections with the families they support.

The service offers a range of support packages for a variety of issues, aiming to build confidence within families and support them as they work to help themselves. This enables families to build resilience and reduce their dependency on social work intervention, or prevent them from requiring it altogether.