

# Child Focus Fostering Agency

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC036628
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 September 2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Jill Marriott
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Address</b>	2-4 Balmoral Road Leyton London E10 5ND
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8518 7896
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Sherico Care Services Limited
<b>Registered manager</b>	Vacant Post
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Noor Hasmat-Ali
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	26 June 2007

---

© Crown copyright 2010

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

Child Focus Fostering is based in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. It is an independent fostering agency providing services for children and young people from birth to 18 years. The service aims to provide safe and nurturing foster placements that meet the assessed needs of children. Carers are recruited from a range of different cultural backgrounds that reflect the racial mix of the children and the local community. At the time of inspection 33 children and young people were placed through the agency. Different types of placements are made available including long term, permanent, continuing and time limited care. Assessment and emergency placements are also considered.

### Summary

At this announced inspection all key fostering standards and the requirements made at the previous inspection were assessed. Overall Child Focus Fostering is providing satisfactory services with good features regarding the care of children and the support for foster carers.

The inspection found that the fostering service has a skilled and qualified management team led by a recently appointed experienced and knowledgeable manager. The manager has identified areas for improvement and has started to put systems in place to review and update service records.

There are sound policies and procedures in place which are well known to staff and carers. Foster carers receive regular supervision and training in all areas of child care and development. Children are matched with carers who are themselves supported to meet individual overall needs.

The foster panel was observed as part of the inspection. It has a number of functions such as dealing with exemptions and extensions to placements, complaints, foster carers reviews and registration and cancellation of registration. It is fully functioning and deals effectively with panel business.

Areas identified for action include mainly the administrative records and records related to children's placements. The service keeps records which detail children's care history but do not include all information required by regulation.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### Improvements since the last inspection

The actions required at the last inspection have been fully met. Records show that interviews for posts in the foster service are undertaken by staff at a suitable level in the organisation. Children confirmed that they are able to access interpreters and can receive information in a range of community languages. This ensures that children have the opportunity to voice their opinions and make informed decisions based on the information they receive.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Foster carers are able to promote the health and development of children placed with them. They receive comprehensive induction and ongoing training to enable them to identify and address specific health needs. Carers are confident about their roles and responsibilities and understand the roles of other professionals involved with individual children. Dealing with medication and first aid is considered essential training. All carers are committed to completing these courses and undertaking refresher training when necessary.

The service ensures that carers are given clear and easily understandable initial information about the health needs of children and young people. Carers are able to describe in detail how individual needs are being met. Both carers and children have a good understanding about how and who to contact for specific health services. The agency has links with the looked after children's nurse, the children and adolescent mental health service and sexual health professionals. Children who spoke to the inspector confirmed that they are registered with a local doctor and attend regular dental check ups. In one case records show that a child wasn't registered with a doctor until nine months after the placement began. Essential health records which should be available within 72 hours of a placement being made are not included on all files seen. Information regarding general practitioners and consent to medical and dental examination, although known to carers, is not always recorded. There is an agreed health policy which is not always followed and this places children at risk. Issues regarding agency records are further explored in this report under organisation.

Carers and children confirmed that a healthy balanced diet is available daily. One young person said 'the food is lovely and the carers cook and help me to cook food from my homeland'. Another young person said 'I can not remember a day when fresh fruit was not available in the home'. Children are encouraged to take healthy exercise, they attend the local leisure centres and are involved in football, swimming and netball.

The agency has just introduced a new system of recording health issues and events. At present carers use their diary to record appointments and related issues. The new system includes a health record book where all health information will be recorded. If children move placement the health record will go with them.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

There is a clear management structure in place and the management team are suitably qualified and experienced. Social workers in the team hold relevant qualifications and are suitably experienced for the work they do. Criminal Records Bureau disclosures are renewed every three years and two appropriate references are obtained prior to a confirmed offer of employment.

Children are placed with foster carers who have been assessed as being able to meet their needs. Foster carers are responsible for ensuring that the welfare of children is safeguarded. A health and safety check is carried out on every fostering household in preparation for the annual review of approval. Carers are required to ensure that evidence of electrical wiring, gas and car maintenance testing is available. They are also responsible for ensuring that the home and car insurances are kept up to date. Each home visited as part of the inspection was welcoming, warm and homely. Children confirmed that they are happy in placement they have their own rooms with furniture and soft furnishings that meet their needs. They said they have a children's guide and they are aware of the procedures in place for making a complaint.

Generally children are matched to carers from the same or a similar background. Where a preferred match is not possible support is offered to individual placements with regard to children's ethnic and cultural background. Carers are knowledgeable about the care and support needed by the children living with them. One young person placed with a carer from a different background said 'the carer supports me with everything. If I need anything or I do not understand they help me'. Another young person said the agency is very supportive, he said when he needed equipment the agency funded it so that he did not have to wait for local authority agreement. The overall needs of each child are reviewed and monitored every six months at statutory child care review meetings. Carers interviewed fully understand the needs of the children placed with them. They are supported by the agency social workers to provide safe care.

Children are protected from abuse and neglect by the agencies safe care policies, procedures and practice guidelines. They are further protected by the knowledge and experience of the staff team and the carers. Carers receive child protection and safe care training. They are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are able to describe how they would work with children who have been abused or who have made an allegation. Children confirmed that they have been given information about keeping safe in the home and when they are out in the community. Carers understand the reporting procedures to follow with regard to allegations, incidents, accidents and complaints.

The foster panel serves children well. It is well managed with effective membership made up of people who are experienced and understand the needs of children. The panel are responsible for making recommendations regarding the registration and cancellation of carers approval and for considering exemptions and extensions to placements. They also consider issues that are identified during the assessment process. The decision making process where there is a disagreement between panel members is fully explained in the panel procedures.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Carers are able to demonstrate how they meet the overall needs of children and young people. The policies, procedures and training available ensure that equality and diversity is thought about and valued through out the fostering process. Both carers and children said that the service is sensitive to issues related to ethnicity and culture. Children and young people are treated with respect and they confirmed that they have the freedom to express their opinions and make choices. One young person spoke about the language class that has helped him to learn English. Another talked about interpreters being available when needed. Children and young people confirmed that they believe their individual needs are met by their carers and by the agency. They said they are happy in placement and they feel valued.

The fostering service promotes educational achievement. Staff and foster carers understand the value and importance of their roles with regard to children's educational development. They attend school events, open days and education planning meetings. Children are encouraged and supported to do well in education and their achievements are recognised and rewarded. There are procedures in place to ensure children attend school and have a personal education plan in place. The preferred option is for children to remain in the school they know. If this is not possible a local school placement is found. The service is committed to finding appropriate education for the few children who are excluded and interim tutoring facilities are made available.

The agency and the carers act as advocates on behalf of children to find alternative education provision where required.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Carers explained that contact is arranged at the initial placement planning meeting. Children confirmed that they understand their individual contact arrangements. It isn't possible to track whether in all cases this is contact agreed with the placing authority. File recordings do not all include full details of the arrangements made. This indicates that contact arrangements are not always fully supported or monitored by the service.

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of significant others are sought with regard to issues likely to affect their daily lives and their futures. They are consulted as part of the child care review process and their views are requested to inform the foster carers review of approval. Feedback information is kept on files. A range of information about the fostering process is included in the children's guide given at the start of each placement. The guide is available on request in different languages, sign and picture symbols. Children said they have access to advocates and social workers and would know how to contact them if they needed to. They said they are supported to gain language skills where English is a second language and interpreters are available as required. It was clear from discussions that children and young people are able to have their say and that their views are listened to and acted upon.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The fostering service helps to prepare children for adulthood. Foster carers confirmed that they have a role in helping them to gain the skills needed to live independently. Young people confirmed that they are supported to learn to budget, shop, cook and keep their rooms tidy. Records of supervising social work visits include some information related to independent living skills. However there are no formal pathway plans on the files of older children.

Foster carers each receive a foster carer's handbook which includes information about the payment system and the breakdown of allowances. Details of payments are agreed at the start of each placement. Allowance levels fully support children to pursue education and leisure activities and allow carers to save weekly for them. The agency fully consider financial payments towards or to cover the cost of items requested for children that are outside of the agreed allowances.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The fostering service has a well qualified and experienced manager and deputy manager. They are supportive and approachable while maintaining professional boundaries and exercising clear management responsibilities. The manager is new in post and has applied to Ofsted for registration. The staff working for the agency have the relevant experience and qualifications for their roles. Their support and development needs are identified through the supervision, training and appraisal systems in place.

Supervising social workers support carers to provide services for children that fully meet their assessed needs and keep them safe. Visits to carers are planned and take place regularly, at least monthly. Carers attend support groups each month. Information regarding services is available in the carer's hand book and the children's guide. There are good systems in place to ensure regular contact between carers and their supervising social workers. Children are regularly asked for feedback about the care they receive and are always involved in feedback for their carer's review of approval.

The Statement of Purpose clearly outlines what services and facilities are available. The children's guide is available in different age ranges to ensure it is understandable. All agency documents, policies and procedures are available in a range of community languages on request.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a diverse staff group and carers are recruited from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The agency makes every effort to match children with appropriate carers. If this is not possible appropriate support is identified to ensure individual needs are met. Where required interpreters are used to support the placement.

The out of hours service is not functioning properly. The last rota was dated May 2010 the system has been reviewed but the replacement system is not yet in use. Carers confirmed that if they need out of hours support they call their supervising social worker. This system is not appropriate. It entails social workers using their own phones and without a clear rota system emergency calls from carers and significant others may not be responded to.

Children's case records are not up to date and children are placed at risk by the limited information available. Files do not in all cases contain information required by regulation. Daily records kept by carers are inconsistent and in one case the last entry was made in June 2010. Foster Placement Agreements are not included on all files. Essential information such as that required about contact, consent for medical treatment, and care plans is not included. The manager has recently reviewed the system and proper recording books have now been introduced. These are not yet being used but will ensure better record keeping when they are.

Administrative records are kept appropriately and stored securely. Separate records are kept for children, carers and members of staff. There is a procedure in place for recording allegations, accidents and incidents. Actions and outcomes are kept up to date. There are some discrepancies on the carer's register and the children's placement register. These documents do not always include information about the termination of children's placements or about the resignation or termination of carers approval. The manager has recently introduced a monitoring system to ensure records are up to date and appropriately maintained.

The premises used as offices by the fostering service has appropriate space available for all staff to work in. Gas, electrical and fire records are maintained and certificates are available. However the certificate for the electrical wiring and the gas installation identify the need for work to be undertaken. Issues regarding the electricity were resolved during the inspection. The gas certificate dated 21/06/2010 described two areas for urgent attention and this work is still outstanding. The Responsible Individual said that the work would be completed immediately and a new certificate would be forwarded to Ofsted.



## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
12	the fostering service provider shall ensure that each child is registered with a general practitioner (Regulation 15 (2)(a))	8 October 2010
22	ensure that the fostering service provides foster parents with support outside of office hours as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them (Regulation 17 (1))	8 October 2010
24	before making a placement the responsible authority shall enter into a written agreement (in these regulations referred to as the "foster placement agreement") with the foster parent relating to the child, which covers the matters specified in Schedule 6 (Regulation 34 (3))	8 October 2010
24	ensure that an accurate record in the form of a register is kept in respect of all children placed with foster carers (Regulation 22 (2) (1))	8 October 2010
25	ensure that the register of foster parents is accurate and is kept up to date (Regulation 31)	8 October 2010
26	ensure the premises are suitable for the providing a fostering service. (Regulation 23(1))	8 October 2010

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- make sure that clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child in foster care are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed. (NMS 10)
- ensure that the fostering service makes sure there are clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing young people for independent and semi independent living. (NMS 14).