



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough of Ealing Fostering Service

Fostering & Adoption

3rd Floor North

Town Hall Annexe

Ealing

London

W5 2BY

19/2/03, 18/3/03, 21/3/03, 25/3/03,
26/3/03, 28/3/03, 21/5/03

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- 4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
- 3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
- 2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
- 1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

London Borough of Ealing Fostering Service

Address

Fostering & Adoption, 3rd Floor North, Town Hall Annexe,
Ealing, London, W5 2BY

Local Authority Manager

Ms Ghazala Sheikh

Tel No:

0208 825 6084

Address

Fostering & Adoption, 3rd Floor North, Town Hall Annexe,
Ealing, London, W5 2BY

Fax No:

Email Address

tuttn@ealing.gov.uk

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

Date of last inspection

Date and Time of Inspection Visit		19/2/03 1:30pm	ID Code
Name of Inspector	1	Mr Ged Durkin	074878
Name of Inspector	2	Ms Pauline Griffin	G10PG1
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)			
Name of Interpreter/Signer (if applicable)			

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the NCSC in respect of London Borough of Ealing Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the NCSC in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED

The fostering service of the London Borough of Ealing is located on two sites in Ealing and Acton. The service provides short term placements, long term placements, kinship placements and short term breaks for children with special needs. The service consists of a Support Team, Access to Resources Team, Recruitment Team and Administration Team. All have separate managers who report to a Service Manager who has overall responsibility for the service. For the purpose of this report the Service Manager is regarded as the Manager of the service. At the time of the Inspection there were 10 qualified social workers, (not including the managers) working across the service and a number of staff on short term contracts. Ealing has made efforts to recruit and retain staff and there did not appear to be any significant gaps in the service during this Inspection. Similarly, the recruitment and retention of a wide variety of foster carers is an ongoing process so that the service can try and ensure that it meets the needs of the children it has to foster.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

INSPECTOR'S SUMMARY

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

On the basis of this Inspection the Ealing Fostering Service appeared to be functioning well. Interviews with the Manager, staff, children and foster carers, examination of policies and procedures and the observation of the Fostering Panel all indicated that the organisation had clear management responsibilities, good lines of communication and a focus on the fostered child or young person. The Inspection has revealed some aspects of the service that will need to be addressed and there are a number of requirements that will have to be implemented. In conclusion, a welcome feature of this Inspection has been the open, transparent approach of the service and the cooperative manner of all those with whom the Inspectors have had contact.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

YES

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Under section 47 (5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service fails to satisfy regulatory requirements, which are not substantial.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection fully actioned?

N/A

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS				
Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002				
No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements and recommendations are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3(1)	FS1	That the Statement of Purpose outlines the information specified in standard 1 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and contains the relevant information as required under regulation 3(1) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	1/9/03
2	20	FS15	That the required information and checks are undertaken in respect of persons seeking to work for the purposes of a fostering service as specified in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	11/8/03
3	34(3)	FS8	That before making a placement, the foster parent is provided with the necessary information to enable them to care for the child as outlined in Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Attention must be given to ensure that information given to foster carers is accurate.	30/6/03
4	26(2)(a)(b)	FS30	That the fostering panel develops and implements a system to periodically monitor the effectiveness of reviews in accordance with regulation 29 and oversee the conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service provider.	1/9/03

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS23	To consider extending the training opportunities available to relatives of foster carers.
2	FS21	That the strategy in place for working with carers should be documented and understood by all concerned. Please refer to the areas outlined in Standard 21 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards.
3	FS23	That feedback on external courses attended by foster carers should be shared with the fostering service in order to assist them with assessing that foster carers are appropriately trained in the interest of children placed with them.

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	5
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NA
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	19/2/03
Time of Inspection	13:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	66

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded | (Commendable) |
| 3 - Standard Met | (No Shortfalls) |
| 2 - Standard Almost Met | (Minor Shortfalls) |
| 1 - Standard Not Met | (Major Shortfalls) |

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Inspectors were provided with a copy of the Statement of Purpose for the service. It did not comply fully with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards or the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Although contained in other information provided to the Inspectors the Statement of Purpose did not contain any information about the number of foster carers working with the local authority, the number of children placed by the local authority and the complaints and their outcomes dealt with by the local authority. In addition, the fostering service had not produced a specific children's guide to fostering and had not been approved by elected members.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager of the service has a social work and management qualification and has been in post since October 2002. The inspection process highlighted that that this manager has the necessary skills and experience to ensure that this service is effectively led and managed.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

An examination of three files of the managers in the fostering service revealed that a number did not have all the information required under Schedule 1, Regulation 20 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. A fourth file requested by the Inspector was not available for inspection.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Interviews with staff and examination of documentary evidence demonstrated that there were clear roles and responsibilities and effective systems of communications throughout the organisation. Supervision occurs on an ongoing basis with staff, there are regular team and business meetings, and foster carers receive ongoing support from their identified Link Workers.

Number of statutory notifications made to NCSC in last 12 months:

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

1

Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.

1

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The service demonstrated this standard was met. The organisation has a clear line management structure with accompanying delegated areas of responsibility and accountability. There are identified arrangements in place for cover when the Manager is absent.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

All foster carers have all the appropriate policies and procedures contained in a comprehensive handbook that is issued by the fostering service. In addition, foster carers have regular support meetings and each has a minimum of a three weekly visit from their Link Worker. The Inspectors visited a randomly selected group of four carers and also spoke to some of the children who were old enough to be interviewed in their care. All the accommodation met the needs of those placed there. All the carers had received "The Foster Carer's Handbook" and the majority confirmed that they had received a good level of support. One couple interviewed indicated to the Inspectors that they had not received very good support and not felt valued enough to the extent that they were now considering leaving the service.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Ealing Borough Council has an Equality and Diversity Policy and the Children's Services Division, (of which the fostering service is a part), has a Monitoring of Racist Incidents & Equalities Standard. The Inspectors were informed by the Manager of the service that recruiting and retaining as diverse a range of foster carers as possible was the aim of the organisation. In addition, foster carers are supported in this area by being provided with training on anti-discrimination and racial awareness. Additional funding is also made available to carers with mixed heritage placements for matters such as skin and hair care. Ealing fostering service is in the process of putting together a draft trans racial policy which when finalised will give greater clarity on this subject.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The Manager informed the Inspectors that at the point of placement request as much information about the child/children is made available in order to try and meet their needs. A large proportion of placements are emergency but as much information as possible is collated and provided. In addition, Link Workers will meet with the social worker and, if appropriate, the child/children to be fostered. Interviews with the carers confirmed that they had received a lot of information about the children they were fostering but that not all this information had been complete or accurate.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Link workers and the young person's social worker monitor placements on an ongoing basis. Ealing Fostering service has its own Complaints and Allegations Procedure, which, if necessary, incorporates a Child Protection Procedure. An examination of the list of complaints (6) submitted against foster carers between April 2002 and March 2003 indicated that strategy meetings had been instigated and investigations carried out. Carers interviewed confirmed that they received specific training on Child Protection. This topic along with the non-use of corporal punishment had been discussed as part of their initial assessment to become carers. Full guidance is also available for carers about allegations of abuse in the handbook given to every carer.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:

X

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The fostering service has a policy that deals with whether it is in the young person in foster care's best interest to promote contact with significant family members. In addition, guidance is supplied to carers in their handbook as to how they might work with other family members of a fostered child. The Manager informed the Inspectors that the needs of the child are discussed at the point of placement and the importance of contact emphasised. Appropriate financial support would be given to cover items such as transport to help facilitate contact. Family support workers are used to supervise family contacts and specialists would be employed to help the placement of larger sibling groups, which may involve complex decisions having to be made.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)
The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Manager informed the Inspectors that the statutory reviewing processes are the primary mechanism by which all the appropriate individuals are consulted about significant issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future. Link workers support carers to ensure that the young person's views are continually sought and heard. The young person also has their own social worker, with whom they can discuss any matter. In addition, the foster carer's handbook has a lot of detail as to the types of meetings that may occur, who should attend them and how they should be conducted.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)
The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The foster carer's handbook gives very clear guidance as to the health care needs of young people in foster care that cover aspects such as physical, emotional and social development. Foster carers interviewed confirmed that training is also provided on First Aid. The fostering service has access to a Looked After Children Nurse who attends the carer's support group and also a medical consultant is available should the need be necessary. Link workers will discuss other general health issues such as hygiene with the carer and facilitate any other health related services such as a school nurse that may be necessary.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)
The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The fostering service has a specific policy to promote the education of children in foster placements. Carers are given detailed guidelines about supporting and enabling the children in their care to have their educational needs met. The manager informed the Inspectors that the Children Services Department has a specialist education team set up to try and ensure that any disruption to a young person's education is kept to a minimum. A member of this team attends the foster carer support group to liase and give support. Young people in foster care can also access educational input at a drop in centre organised for looked after children by the department. There is also a recently launched incentive scheme that financially rewards young people in foster care who attain satisfactory exam results. Interviews with carers confirmed that all were actively involved in the promotion of education of those in their care.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

None of the foster care placements visited by Inspectors had young people actively involved in preparation for independent adult living. Interviews with one of the young people indicated that he/she had a part time job and received appropriate help and support in matters such as shopping and budgeting from his/her foster carer.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

1

An examination of five files of staff who work in the fostering service revealed that a number did not have all the information required under Schedule 1, Regulation 20 of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The Manager informed the Inspectors that some staff were recruited via agencies and some were on short-term contracts. All the carers interviewed confirmed that they had been through a rigorous assessment procedure that included initial meetings, interviews, referee interviews, medical checks, CRB checks, inspection of premises and being presented before the Fostering Panel. A check of the carer files confirmed that all had had statutory checks made on them.

Total number of staff of the agency:

36

Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has a clear management structure and lines of responsibility and accountability. The fostering service comprises of three teams made up of the Support Team, Recruitment Team and Access to Resources Team. There is also an administration team that gives support to the fostering and adoption team. Each has a manager who is responsible to the Operations Manager. Interviews with the Operations Manager and staff confirmed that staff receive regular supervision and that the department had an accessible training programme that staff or carers could utilise. Interviews with foster carers confirmed that they receive regular support from their Link Workers through direct visits and telephone support.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)		
The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The fostering service appeared to have an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff. The majority of the posts in all the teams were filled. The Manager informed the Inspectors that an overview is kept of case loads for staff and that all foster carer assessments are undertaken by qualified social workers. Ealing Social Services has a specific package to try and recruit and retain social workers and offers financial inducements to do practice training and a post qualification award. Those staff interviewed had the necessary qualifications and experience to be able to carry out their tasks. The recruitment of carers is an ongoing process. The fostering service has a proactive approach to recruiting carers that involves running a variety of advertising campaigns designed to attract as wide as variety of foster carers as possible.		

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Manager informed the Inspectors the fostering service has a recruitment policy based on equal opportunities with a commitment to provide regular supervision with opportunities for training and professional development. Staff also have access to a professional counsellor. The Manager and Director of Children Services can be approached by staff if they have an issue they wish to discuss. Foster carers have their own designated Link Worker who will offer what ever support is necessary. There is also the foster carer's support group, which meets on a regular basis. Similarly, if the carer wishes to discuss any matter with the Manager then they are free to do so. The fostering service also offers an out of hours service which carers can access if they need to. In addition, carers can utilise the department's complaints procedure should they wish to.		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Inspectors saw the core training programme for the Housing and Social Services Department. In addition to these courses the Inspectors were told by the Manager that there were external courses and a social work training scheme available. There is also a Practice Development Forum that consists of a monthly two hour seminar that acts as an update for staff on current policy issues. Carer's training needs are reviewed during their annual review. Core NVQ level 2 training is offered to all carers. Carers can also access any internal department training. Interviews with staff and carers confirmed that a range of training was available according to the needs of the individual.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The Inspectors saw evidence that all staff interviewed had clear knowledge of their roles and responsibilities. In addition, all received a good level of support and supervision along line management responsibilities. Foster carers received support from their link workers, support group and an out of hours service, (if necessary).</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The Manager informed the Inspectors that the service does not have a written strategy for working with and supporting carers. Rather, the service ensures that all foster carers have an allocated Link Worker who has regular contact and who actively encourages each carer to attend the carer's support group. The Link Worker will also access all necessary training for the carer and ensure that they have received the comprehensive carer's handbook, which contains all the relevant policies, procedures and guidelines. The service reviews the carers on an annual basis in order to ensure all necessary support and help is being given.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)		
The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The Manager of the service informed the Inspectors that it was the Link Worker's role to monitor and supervise the placement and identify any knowledge or skill gaps and to encourage the carer to undertake all necessary training. Interviews with carers confirmed that they receive a good level of support from their allocated Link Worker.</p>		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Foster carers receive preparatory training as part of their assessment process before becoming carers. In addition, they are offered NVQ training and are able to access any appropriate departmental training. Interviews with carers confirmed that they were able to access training on a regular basis at times and venues convenient to them. The Manager acknowledged that this was an area of the service that needs to be developed in order to include relatives of foster carers. In addition, currently, only feedback on internal training is received by the fostering service. Feedback on external courses goes back to the training department without reference to the fostering service.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Manager informed the Inspectors that there is an up to date case record maintained on every young person in foster care. This case record is maintained by the Link Worker. The department has a clear policy and guidance on access to records to those under the age of 18. Any work done with reference to accessing case records by a young person in care is undertaken by staff trained in preparing young people for independent living.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The case records are currently being standardised in a new filing system. One of the Inspectors examined the case files of those foster placements that were visited as part of the Inspection process. Some of the files examined contained a lot of historical information that might not have been relevant for the current placement but nevertheless represented valuable information about earlier life events/issues. The need to organise all relevant information into one manageable file was obvious from this examination and is being actioned.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

122

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

82

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

34

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

19

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

9

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

90.55

Maximum £

278.57

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- **The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.**

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises used as offices by the fostering service appeared to be adequate and appropriate. The Manager had her own office shared by other staff, which was attached to an open office area where the rest of the staff team were located. The office had good secure storage for files, sufficient IT and telephone lines. The other office is situated in Acton and was not inspected on this occasion. The Inspectors were informed that there were no significant issues regarding that office.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

This Standard is not applicable to an NCSC inspection of a Local Authority Fostering Service.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The finances of the fostering service are managed within the London Borough of Ealing's budgetary system. The Manager is responsible for managing the fostering service's budget, which is done by examining monthly records of expenditure. The accounts of the service are examined by Ealing's external auditors.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Manager of the fostering service informed the Inspectors that there is a designated staff member who has the responsibility to ensure that payments and allowances are paid promptly to the carers. The amounts paid reflect expenditure on birthday and Xmas presents. The carer's handbook gives clear information as to the type of allowances payable. Interviews with carers confirmed that they received their allowances promptly on a weekly basis.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.**

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The fostering service has clear and detailed written policies and procedures regarding the guidelines, membership and remit of the fostering panel. Two Inspectors attended a fostering panel and observed the panel to conduct itself in a thorough, measured and professional manner as it dealt with the presentations before it. The panel chair was interviewed and he confirmed the view of the panel as being a body designed to question and quiz in order to safeguard the welfare of any children placed in the care of foster carers. There is no formal quality assurance system for monitoring the work of the assessors and to ensure consistency of approach from the different agencies, which provide information to the panel. The proposed publication of an annual report of the panel, the chair hoped, would give scope to comment on the quality of assessments that the panel has put before it.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service provides a Family Link service that provides short-term breaks for families with children with disabilities and a sitting service for children in the child's home. The Inspectors interviewed one of the senior staff involved with this service who confirmed that there were particular policies and procedures that were followed to ensure that these particular young people had their needs met. In the procedure it states that, "The principle behind short term breaks is to underpin and not undermine relationships with parents."

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- **Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.**

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has a specific policy and procedure for the referral, assessment and post approval arrangements for those carers who are within the fostered child or young person's kinship network. There are currently 18 kinship carers.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

Lead Inspector _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 19/2, 18/3, 21/3, 25/3, 26/3, 28/3, 21/5 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

An Action Plan has been received from the provider and agreed by the NCSC. A copy of the provider's comments are available at the Area office.

Action taken by the NCSC in response to the provider's comments:

- Amendments to the report were necessary
- Comments were received from the provider
- Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report
- Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

- Action plan was required
- Action plan was received at the point of publication
- Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion
- Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion
- Provider has declined to provide an action plan
- Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I, Ghazala Sheikh of Ealing Fostering Service confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name	<u>Ghazala Sheikh</u>
Signature	<u>Ghazala Sheikh (signed)</u>
Designation	<u>Children's Placement Manager</u>
Date	<u>04/06/2003</u>

Or

D.3.2 I, Ghazala Sheikh of Ealing Fostering Service am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name	_____
Signature	_____
Designation	_____
Date	_____

Commission for Social Care Inspection
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120
www.csci.org.uk

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