



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Fostering Services (LBHF)

**Barclay House
2nd Floor, Effie Road
Fulham
London
SW6 1EN**

Lead Inspector
Paula Eaton

Announced Inspection
7th August 2006 09:45

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Fostering Services (LBHF)
Address	Barclay House 2nd Floor, Effie Road Fulham London SW6 1EN
Telephone number	020 8753 2300
Fax number	020 8753 2329
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.lbhf.gov.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mr Steve Miley
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 9th January 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Fostering Service provides placements for children and young people with approved carers. The Service provides full-time, short term and respite placements with approximately 200 carers. The Service operates six teams of social workers, each with its own Team Manager. One team deals with the recruitment and approval of foster carers; two teams support foster carers after approval by the Council's Fostering Panel; one team provides short breaks for children with a disability and there are also Access to Resources and Treatment Foster Care Teams. Since the last inspection a Relatives Team has been established that now deals with all Kinship care and Private Fostering arrangements. All placements are approved by the Council to ensure children and young people placed are safe and well cared for. The service is based in Social Services offices, shared with the Council's Looked After Children teams and other services for children and young people. The office provides secure accommodation for confidential information.

SUMMARY

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

This annual statutory inspection took place over six days. Time was spent in the offices of the service viewing case records, policies and procedures and interviewing staff. The service manager, two team managers, two recruitment social workers, two supervising social workers and two social workers allocated to the Relatives Team were spoken to. The Training and Development Consultant, Clinical Psychologist and the Team Manager for the Support Foster Care service were also spoken to. The Foster Panel was observed and the Chair of the panel was spoken to after the panel meeting. Three foster carers were visited and two young people were spoken to. Questionnaires were sent out to all children over eight years of age that were being looked after by the fostering service. Seven questionnaires were returned and the young people that completed the questionnaires were all very positive about the care they were receiving. Forty questionnaires were sent out to foster carers of which 14 were returned. Again these were generally very positive about the service. This inspection was completed alongside the Adoption inspection and the inspection of the Private Fostering arrangements in place.

What the service does well:

The service has a committed and motivated staff team that support each other and are lead by an effective and approachable management team.

The self-development of foster carers and staff is encouraged and supported and the service has a dedicated Training and Development Consultant who has developed a resource library for staff and carers to access.

The service has developed specialised Support Foster Care and Treatment Foster Care teams to provide support to families and young people.

The service has an effective Fostering Panel.

The service has developed innovative recruitment strategies.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the time of the inspection the service was in the process of developing and installing a new IT system to provide more efficient record keeping. Staff had already started using this system for some records.

The Training and Development Consultant has developed a resource library for foster carers and staff.

What they could do better:

Consultation with young people could be improved and also the monitoring systems used by the service.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The service is proactive in ensuring the health needs of young people are well met with evidence of appropriate healthcare arrangements being in place.

EVIDENCE:

It was evident from the children's case files viewed that the health needs of children were being assessed and met. It was evident from the records and speaking to foster carers and young people that health checks were taking place as required. For example appointments are made for dental and optician check ups and foster carers ensure children are registered with a GP. Statutory medicals were taking place.

A Clinical Psychologist works for the service part time whose role is to provide consultation and support for foster carers and social workers regarding issues such as challenging behaviour, development, placement breakdown and identifying the need for specialist input such as mental health services and therapeutic placements.

The training programme for foster carers includes training on health promotion and the training and development consultant provided documentation for a planned first aid course to be facilitated by the Red Cross.

It was evident from the records viewed that foster carers and young people were being given advice on health issues by social workers. In the questionnaires completed by young people comments regarding healthy living were made such as 'My foster carer gives me healthy food' and 'My foster carer tells me about playing football and exercising to stay healthy'.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The service satisfactorily promotes and protects the safety and welfare of Looked After Children.

EVIDENCE:

The service manager is a qualified social worker who has many years experience working in and managing children's services. One of the Adoption Inspectors examined the recruitment files for the service during the inspection. This inspector found evidence that only one reference had been followed up by telephone and that although Criminal Record Bureau checks were being renewed three yearly there was sometimes a gap in this process.

The homes of three foster carers were visited during the inspection. All three provided satisfactory accommodation and adequate space and privacy for the children being looked after. The environments were homely and welcoming and the young people spoken to were happy with their care. There was evidence of annual health and safety checks being completed in the records viewed and foster carers also confirmed that these did take place. Foster carers are also provided with health and safety guidance and are financially supported to ensure that they have all of the necessary equipment to ensure the safety of children and young people in their care. For example, foster carers are supported to purchase fire blankets, smoke alarms and stair gates.

The matching of placements is completed by the Access to Resources Team who then pass the case to the supervising social worker for that foster carer. One of the supervising social workers spoken to said that this system usually works well and that there is usually some consultation between the supervising social worker and the Access to Resources Team before a placement is made. However, this social worker also said that on occasion this consultation has not taken place and that this has led to problems where the placing social worker has not known the foster carer or their current circumstances.

From the records viewed and from visiting foster carers it was evident that the service strives to make appropriate matches wherever possible. The service manager said that supervising social workers work on an individual basis with foster carers to ensure they are able to meet the needs of children if there are identified gaps in the matching process such as a trans-racial placement.

All foster carers are provided with Child Protection training and Safe Caring is included in the 'Skills to Foster' pre-approval training. The service focuses on re-enforcing positive behaviour and encouraging and rewarding children. This was evident from recorded interactions with young people and foster carers and from the information provided to foster carers. The service makes very clear that corporal punishment is not acceptable and this is included in the Foster Carers Agreement as required.

The records seen showed that allegations made about foster carers were dealt with in a thorough and consistent manner. However, the system in place to monitor the allegations received by the department as a whole was not working as the information was not always recorded in the correct way for this monitoring to occur.

It was evident from the record of assessments completed and subsequent records and also from speaking to foster carers that they had some understanding of the complex needs and vulnerability of Looked After Children.

The service has an appropriate procedure in place for when children and young people abscond from fostering placements.

The service has appropriate recruitment policies and procedures in place. The Adoption Inspectors viewed employee records. Generally these contained all of the required information, however, as mentioned earlier there was not evidence that all references had been followed up by telephone and there was sometimes a gap before Criminal Records Bureau checks had been renewed.

A meeting of the fostering panel was observed during which three cases were presented to panel for a recommendation to be made. The panel had the appropriate composition as required by the Fostering Regulations 2002 and has members with a great deal of expertise in areas of childcare including Social

Work and Education. It was evident from the discussions that took place during the panel that a great deal of consideration was given to the information presented before a recommendation was made. It was obvious that all of the members present at the panel had evaluated the panel documentation prior to the panel and a healthy constructive discussion took place and a consensus was reached. It was also evident from observing the panel and viewing previous panel minutes that the panel is used as a quality assurance forum for the form F assessments that are carried out. The foster carers attending the panel were made to feel welcome and information was explained as required. The Chair of the panel was spoken to after the panel meeting was observed. The Chair has been in position for several years and said that panel members had attended study days to support them in completing the task. The panel also has advisers in education and health that can be consulted if necessary. The Service Manager said that a replacement was being sought for the elected members position on the panel due to the change in administration.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7, 13 and 31

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The fostering service values diversity and strives to meet the diverse needs of the looked after children it cares for. The educational provision for the children placed is good and educational achievements are promoted. An appropriate short-term break service is available.

EVIDENCE:

It was evident from speaking to foster carers and staff and from the records viewed that appropriate matches are made wherever possible to ensure the diverse needs of children are met. It was also evident that children and young people are encouraged to maintain their identity and are supported to embrace their cultural heritage.

It was evident from the records viewed that the educational achievements of Looked After Children are monitored and that efforts are made to ensure that young people maintain their educational placements. Foster carers are made aware of their responsibilities with regards to promoting educational achievement and liaising with educational establishments when required, for example, attending open evenings and ensuring young people have somewhere to study. The young people visited had space to study in the foster carers home.

The service provides a short breaks service and also a specialised support foster care service to support families in crisis. In both cases parents remain

central to the promotion of both health and educational needs. The service has a pool of six support foster carers who work with parents, young people and family support services and the team was in the process of approving further carers to contribute to this service. The manager of this team was spoken to; she said that the emphasis of this work was as a preventative measure in that work could be completed with young people and their families to try and prevent young people from going into care on a more permanent basis.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10 and 11

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Contact arrangements are promoted and maintained for children. Consultation with children and young people could be improved.

EVIDENCE:

Arrangements for contact are made when a child is placed and any restrictions are clearly stated in the foster placement agreement. The foster carers spoken to were able to describe how they manage the contact arrangements for the children placed in their care.

Foster carers are given clear guidelines about managing contact and recording and reporting any changes in a child's behaviour prior to or after contact. The recordings viewed confirmed that foster carers were following these guidelines and supporting children to remain in contact with important individuals in their lives.

Although there was some evidence of consultation with young people this could be greatly improved. One member of staff had devised a pro-forma for ascertaining the views of young people prior to annual reviews and discussions were taking place regarding developing a pro-forma such as this to be used for all young people. The young people spoken to said that they were talked to regularly by the Supervising Social Worker for their foster carer(s) and there was also evidence in the records viewed that children and young people had been consulted with during these visits. It is important that more information is obtained regarding young people's views of the care they are receiving especially with regard to the annual reviews of foster carers.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

29

Quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Foster carers are paid a sufficient allowance and additional expenses to ensure they are able to meet the needs of the children placed with them.

EVIDENCE:

Carers were aware of the fees and allowances available and said that payments were made on time straight into their bank accounts. It was also evident from the financial records viewed that foster carers are supported financially to ensure they have adequate health and safety equipment in their homes and also appropriate bedding. It was also evident that contributions towards holidays for Looked After Children had been made and also some foster carers had been supported with home improvements with regard to providing extra space in their homes.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

17, 21, 23, 24, 26 and 32

Quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The service provides good quality training for foster carers and provides appropriate support and supervision to foster carers. Appropriate records are maintained for children placed. The service has satisfactory accommodation suitable for its purpose.

EVIDENCE:

The service has a very skilled and experienced workforce that provides support to foster carers and there are adequate numbers of staff to meet the needs of the service. All of the staff spoken to were clear about their roles and responsibilities within the service and were committed to providing a good service.

There are adequate numbers of foster carers and the service has used innovative and successful strategies to recruit more foster carers. For example, the service has an annual schools competition to devise a poster for their recruitment campaign. The child who has drawn the winning picture receives a prize as does the winning school and the child's picture is then used throughout the borough to recruit foster carers. Other strategies have included a balloon launch with one balloon representing each Looked After Child in the borough and an advert on packets of sunflower seeds. The service also now has a dedicated marketing and publicity member of staff who will concentrate on the recruitment of foster carers.

It was evident from the records viewed that the service has a clear and comprehensive assessment process for prospective foster carers. However, it was noted in some of the records viewed for two particular cases presented to panel that assessment visits with prospective foster carers had taken place in public places. This is not acceptable.

The foster carers visited felt supported by their supervising social worker. One foster carer in particular had had the same supervising social worker for some time and had felt very well supported by her. The service has foster care support groups for foster carers and foster carers were aware of the role of their supervising social worker. Foster carers have access to an out of hours service and the emergency duty team. The foster carers spoken to said they had found this service helpful when they had had to use it.

All annual reviews are presented to panel and a comprehensive report is completed by the supervising social worker. However, as mentioned previously there needs to be more opportunities for children and young people to contribute to this process.

The service has a training and development consultant that arranges the training programme for foster carers. This member of staff was spoken to during the inspection. He was able to demonstrate how the service was striving to ensure that foster carers attend a wide range of training courses to enhance their skills as foster carers and enable them to meet the needs of the Looked After Children in their care. Available training courses included training on child development, record keeping, Child Protection, life story work, behaviour management, safe caring, domestic violence, first aid and separation and loss.

The Training and Development Consultant was also able to demonstrate how he had made links with local health services to assist with providing training and resources and he had also set up a training resource library for staff and foster carers to access. Foster carers are also able to complete NVQ level 3 training and many foster carers had already taken the opportunity to do this.

At the time of the inspection there were not individual training records maintained for foster carers. There were also no training records maintained on the files for foster carers, which made it difficult for supervising social workers to monitor the training that was being attended by foster carers they were supporting.

The children's case files viewed were generally in order and contained all of the required information. However, it was noted that one file contained the records of all three children of a sibling group. This is not acceptable. The needs of children were clearly recorded along with how each child's needs should be met. All the required documentation had been completed and was up to date.

The offices for the service are all based in one building in Fulham Broadway. There are good transport links to the offices and disabled access. There were adequate IT and communication systems in place although a new computer system was being introduced at the time of the inspection to enable electronic files to be maintained across the service. This should also allow for more efficient monitoring systems to be developed.

The service has developed a Relatives Team that deals with Kinship carers and Private Fostering arrangements. Two workers from this team were spoken to. From the records seen and from speaking to these two members of staff it was clear that a thorough assessment of these carers had been completed and that these carers were being offered adequate support.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	2
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	3
31	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	2

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	X
29	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
2	X
4	X
5	X
16	X
17	2
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	3
22	3
23	3
24	2
25	X
26	3
27	X
28	X
32	3

NO

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS9	Schedule 7	Adequate monitoring systems must be in place and satisfactorily utilised by the service.	01/02/07
2	FS11	42(3)	Consultation with children and young people regarding the foster care they receive must improve.	01/02/07
3	FS24	22(1)	Separate case records must be maintained for each Looked After child cared for by the service	01/10/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS3	All references for prospective members of staff should be followed up by telephone.
2	FS3	All Criminal Records Bureau checks should be renewed every three years.
3	FS8	Consultation with the Supervising Social Worker for a foster carer should take place before a placement is made wherever possible.

4	FS17	Assessment visits should be carried out in a suitable and appropriate environment
5	FS23	Separate records should be maintained for each Looked After Child

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Hammersmith Local Office
11th Floor, West Wing
26-28 Hammersmith Grove
London
W6 7SE

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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