



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### Greater London Fostering

**Interiors House  
Lynton Road  
London  
N8 8SL**

*Lead Inspector*  
Peter Allcock

*Key Announced Inspection*  
6th November 2006      09:30

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

<b>Reader Information</b>	
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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](http://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](http://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

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<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Greater London Fostering
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Linda Norwood
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      10th January 2006

## **Brief Description of the Service:**

Greater London Fostering is a private limited company run by three directors and operating as a fostering agency from premises in Crouch End in North London. The agency was set up in August 1998, its first panel was held in January 1999 and the first child was placed in March 1999. The agency is registered by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

The agency provides social work support to the foster carers, which is facilitated by the fact that social workers live close to carers and work primarily from home.

The agency has its own panel, which meets on a monthly basis, and holds regular monthly training, which is provided on weekdays and Saturdays at a variety of venues to maximise the attendance of foster carers.

The agency provides facilities for contact visits at its office.

# SUMMARY

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

This is the fourth annual inspection of this fostering agency, and has focussed on an assessment of the core national minimum standards applicable to such agencies. The inspection was undertaken by Peter Allcock and took place between the 7<sup>th</sup> November and 22 December 2006. The inspector wishes to acknowledge the courteous and professional response from the directors and staff of the agency, and would also like to thank the foster carers, children and young people who were visited or spoken to for their time and assistance in carrying out this inspection.

The inspector attended a staff team meeting, and a meeting of the foster panel. Whilst in the agency's offices, the inspector interviewed the agency's three directors, the chair of the panel and a number of staff. Two foster families were visited during this inspection.

The inspector received written questionnaires from eighteen foster carers, ten foster children and two placing social workers. These questionnaires demonstrated that children and young people generally felt that they were placed in good foster homes, were protected and were listened to. Foster carers questionnaires showed that they felt supported by the agency and that the support of individual supervising social workers, the accessibility of senior management and the quality of training were particularly valued. Questionnaires from the placing officers indicated that the agency works well with placing authorities, that the children and young people for whom they are responsible are in safe placements and that they would place other young people with this agency in the future.

## **What the service does well:**

The inspector continues to be impressed by this organisation, in that it continues to demonstrate an ability to reflect on strengths and weaknesses, and to develop practice accordingly. The directors and staff strive to operate with a public sector ethos, and with a strong focus on the needs of the children and young people that it places.

The agency has robust procedures for the recruitment and selection of foster carers, and the ongoing programme of training and support, which has been accredited by Middlesex University, is commendable.

The administration of the agency is effective and efficient, with systems in place to monitor its performance.

The agency employs competent and experienced staff and has effectively deployed the students on placement with a careful consideration of the needs of foster carers and the children and young people placed with them. The work allocated to students on placement includes individual work with foster carers, children and young people and project work targeted to meet their individual learning needs and develop practice in the agency in a systematic way.

The agency has an experienced and effective Panel, which performs its quality assurance functions with vigour, and monitors the foster carer reviews which are undertaken to a high standard.

The agency is well regarded by the majority of foster carers, and offers a commendable range of social activities to re-enforce the ethos that the networks supporting a placement are crucial to its success.

Foster carers supplied by the agency are supported by robust systems in safeguarding the welfare of children and young people, and in promoting their health and welfare. Children and young people are able to pursue interests and activities, and are supported through appropriate contact to maintain relationships with their family and friends that are important to them.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

There were no requirements made at the last inspection, and over the last year, there have been a number of service developments as a response to the previous inspection report, and the agency's own monitoring of its performance. Consultation with foster carers and children has become more systematic, and the training offered to foster carers has been validated by Middlesex University, allowing foster carers to study for nationally recognised qualifications at various levels to meet their individual needs.

## **What they could do better:**

There are no requirements made as a result of this inspection, and this is reflective of an agency that has well developed internal mechanisms for assessing and developing its practice. Discussion with the directors of the agency and the developments in response to previous inspection and internal monitoring demonstrate a clear commitment to the continued development of the agency's practice.

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](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.



# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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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 **excellent**. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

Children and young people benefit from living in foster homes where their foster carers are supported and trained to ensure that their health and development is promoted.

## EVIDENCE:

### NMS 12 – Health and Development

The Greater London Fostering Carer's Handbook sets out the responsibilities of foster carers in promoting the health and development of the children and young people in their care. This information has been supported by the provision of training by the agency in the promotion of children and young people's health.

All the children and young people placed by the agency are registered with a GP, and records seen during this inspection indicated that the majority of children and young people had received statutory medicals as appropriate (98%). The foster carers handbook acknowledges that as young people grow and develop, they have the right to make decisions about the medical treatment that they choose to receive, based on an understanding of the consequences of any decisions that they may make. The inspector noted that a number of younger children's questionnaires described the encouragement that they had received from foster carers to eat a healthy diet. The availability of fresh fruit and vegetables was seen in both the homes visited by the inspector. A number of the children and young people's questionnaires described how their foster carers made sure that they went to the doctor when they were unwell.

During the past year, the agency has worked with Tottenham Hotspur Football Club Study Centre to design and deliver a training programme for foster carers focussing on healthy eating. The directors of the agency told the inspector that the take up for this training had been very good, given the unusual method of delivery and the added attraction of a tour of the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

The agency is aware that health history information on a number of young people is often limited when initially placed, and are attempting to address this issue by piloting a new format for the recording of health information on referral, providing valuable information which should allow the agency to track children and young people's health history.

# 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, 30**

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

The safety of children and young people is safeguarded by the agencies recruitment and selection procedures for carers and staff, which ensure that they are cared for by suitable foster carers, who are in turn supported by appropriately, trained and experienced staff. Children and young people live in safe foster homes, and benefit from the oversight of an experienced and effective foster panel which is diligent in its monitoring of the quality of the service that they receive.

## **EVIDENCE:**

### **NMS 3 - The Registered Persons**

Examination of records held in the agency demonstrated that those required under Regulations 5 and 7 Schedule 1 to demonstrate the fitness of the senior staff of the agency are appropriately kept and up to date. The agency has maintained these records to a high standard over a number of years. All the directors of the agency have a current enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau, and are suitable people to operate a business concerned with the welfare of vulnerable children and young people. Commendably all staff,

students and foster carers are issued with photo identity cards.

## **NMS 6 – Suitability of Foster Carers**

The foster carers who were visited as part of this inspection were aware of the inspection process and were welcoming and very helpful to the inspector. Both foster carers confirmed that their homes were given a health and safety inspection as part of their assessment, and then inspected on an annual basis by the agency's health and safety officer as part of the review process. The inspector saw written reports of these inspections, which are detailed and comprehensive, and contain recommendations appropriate to the ages of the children to be placed in the home.

The inspector was told by the administration director that the agency will provide smoke detectors, a fire extinguisher, a fire blanket and first aid kit where required. Health and safety issues are included in the preparation and training of foster carers, and written health and safety advice is included in the foster carers handbook. The health and safety officer is an environmental health officer by profession, and the agency has recently engaged an additional health and safety officer, and both regularly attend training to update their health and safety knowledge. Social workers spoken to during this inspection were knowledgeable as to their responsibilities to monitor the health and safety of foster carers homes.

The inspector discussed the health and safety implications of one foster placement at length with the directors of the agency. It is clear that local authorities are increasingly using foster care as a placement option for adolescents with significantly challenging behaviour, which may pose a threat to the safety of foster carers, birth children, other foster children in placement and to themselves. It is therefore recommended that the registered persons liaise with the placing authorities to further develop the risk assessment process so that the particular risks that these young people present can be fully assessed, and appropriate management strategies put in place.

## **NMS 8 - Matching**

The foster placement agreements seen during this inspection contain specific references to the elements of matching which are taken into consideration in agreeing the placement, and demonstrate that consideration has been given to any additional support that the foster carer may require to support the child or young person placed with them, for example where the foster carer and child are not from the same ethnic community or religious background. The inspector was impressed by the length and detailed consideration given by the agency in considering the appropriate matching of its carers with children and young people put forward by local authorities.

## **NMS 9 - Safeguarding**

The agency has a written policy and systems in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse as set out in national minimum standard 9.5. Safe caring guidelines are included in both foster carer training and in the foster carers handbook. All young people placed have a safe caring plan. There is a clear written procedure in place to guide foster carers on the appropriate action to take if a child goes missing from the placement, and foster carers spoken to as part of this inspection were aware of what action they were required to take if this was to occur.

The inspector saw the records of recent child protection concerns raised during the last year. The response to these concerns by the agency has been prompt and in accordance with local child protection procedures. Commendably, where local authorities have declined to follow identified concerns, the agency has undertaken its own investigations to ensure that it is satisfied with the quality of care provided by their foster carers, and to ensure that the welfare of children and young people it places is fully safeguarded.

Foster children and young people spoken to as part of this inspection told the inspector that they were not being bullied, and this was reflected in the responses of children and young people who replied to questionnaires sent out by the inspector.

## **NMS 15 – Suitability of Staff**

The agency has clearly set out policies and procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. Staff files contain evidence of interview, two references (one from the previous employer), and a medical information form. The registered manager told the inspector that offers of employment are only made following receipt by the agency of satisfactory checks.

The current procedure in respect of social work students placed with the agency is that the placing university maintains a record of discussion with students, including details of the decision making process in accordance with Department of Health guidance.

All social work staff employed by the agency are well qualified and experienced practitioners. Discussion with social workers over the course of this inspection demonstrated this practical experience and knowledge of professional social work with children and families.

## **NMS 30 – Foster Panel**

The inspector read the minutes of three previous panel meetings, interviewed the chair of the panel and attended the meeting of the panel held on 10/01/06.

The Greater London Fostering panel operates under clearly set out policies and procedures with respect to its function, and operation, which includes the minimum number and make up of the panel, and the procedure for decision making when all the members of the panel are not in agreement. There is a clear person specification for panel membership, which includes a statement that all panel members must undergo an appropriate Criminal Records Bureau check, and cannot sit on the panel until it is received. A clear enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau was seen at previous inspections in respect of each current member of the panel. The current membership of the panel includes both employees of the agency, and independent members with expertise in education, child health and personal experience of foster caring and being placed with a foster carer.

Examination of records showed appropriate recording of panel discussions and decisions, with a clear record of the exercise of the panel's quality assurance role, with records showing appropriate comment on the quality of assessment, the consultation process with children and the frequency of support worker visits and reviews. As noted last year, the inspector continues to be impressed with the sensitive manner in which the panel addressed foster carers who attended, as part of their assessment or following their review.

# 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, 31**

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

Children and young people live with foster carers who are trained and supported by the fostering agency to value diversity and promote equality and their educational achievement.

## **EVIDENCE:**

### **NMS 7 - Diversity**

Children and young people placed by the agency come from a great variety of backgrounds, and discussion with the manager, staff and foster carers supported the impression that issues of diversity and equal opportunities are treated with importance by the agency. The agency provides training in promoting heritage and identity as part of their induction programme and there is a requirement that all foster carers attend within their first six months of fostering. The training includes nurturing the heritage of children and young people, addressing children and young people's needs, challenging attitudes, and supporting children and young people to deal with all forms of discrimination

Discussion with foster carers showed understanding of the ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children and young people who are placed with them.



The agency has held specific days to celebrate Asian culture and food, and that of the Caribbean, which provides opportunities to celebrate the diverse backgrounds of the agencies foster carers and the children and young people they care for. This initiative has been built on by employing foster carers to cater for social and training events, to communicate the culture of the agency by providing food which reflects the diversity of carers and the children and young people they care for.

### **NMS 13 - Education**

All the foster children spoken to as part of this inspection were receiving education where appropriate, and records of reviews demonstrated a contribution in this area from foster carers. All the children of school age seen by the inspector had a quiet place to do their homework, and records seen demonstrated that foster carers attended meetings at their foster children's school.

The questionnaires returned to the inspector by children and young people described positively how their foster carers supported their education. There was extensive evidence on file that supervising social workers make considerable efforts to ensure that educational information is sought from placing social workers with varying degrees of success. The agency is actively considering how they can more successfully gain this information.

The agency provides training to foster carers on how they can support children's education, and education is a standing agenda item in foster carers supervision meetings with their supporting social worker. During the last year, the agency have changed the way that they provide training to foster carers on supporting young people's education, by including input led by young people who described the qualities in their foster carers that most helped them with their education. Senior staff of the agency told the inspector that this had been particularly effective.

### **NMS 31 – Short Term Breaks**

This national minimum standard is not applicable, as Greater London Fostering does not provide a short-term break service.

# 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, 11

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

Children and young people know that they will be consulted on matters that affect their lives, and benefit from the maintenance of their important relationships through appropriate contact arrangements which are supported by their foster carers.

## EVIDENCE:

### NMS 10 - Contact

The importance for children and young people of maintaining contact with their families, and the expectations of foster carers in supporting contact arrangements are set out in the foster carers handbook, and contact arrangements are recorded in foster placement agreements. The agency has provided training in working in partnership with parents and families, and also in sharing skills in work with parents and families. A number of foster children told the inspector that they had regular contact with members of their family, and foster carers spoken to, and who submitted questionnaires, understood the importance of contact, which they had supported in sometimes-difficult circumstances.

Arrangements for contact have been further enhanced by the provision of a contact centre in the agency's offices, and as noted in the last report the contact centre provides an appropriate area for contact visits between parents and babies. Where appropriate, and in negotiation with the placing local authority, birth parents are included in the agency's social events and outings.

## **NMS 11 - Consultation**

The general impression gained from children and young people spoken to during this inspection and from returned questionnaires was that children and young people felt listened to, and that foster carers actively sought their opinions on matters that they felt were important or affected their everyday lives. The majority of children and young people were aware of somebody they could speak to if they were unhappy, and the complaints procedure is included in the children's guide. Foster carers, children and young people spoken to during this inspection told the inspector that the agency's supervising social workers regularly make time to talk to them on their own.

The agency has developed consultation systems with foster carers from which have developed a number of focus groups of staff and foster carers to develop aspects of the operation of the agency identified during the consultation process. Training has been provided in listening to children and young people, focussing on effective listening skills, listening to children in the context of establishing a relationship, and the application of effective listening to key situations such as welcoming a new child to a foster home.

The loose-leaf format of the children's guide provides an opportunity to tailor the guide to the needs of individual children and young people, and to develop relationships as children and young people contribute to the guide. The importance of developing and sustaining a relationship with young people is described in the pre-inspection material sent by the agency as central to the role of the supervising social worker, and there was ample evidence to show that supervising social workers had developed positive relationships with young people. The frequency of visiting supports both the formation and sustaining of these relationships.

During the last year, the agency has built on this work by developing a focus group to encourage the more systematic involvement of children and young people in the operation of the agency. This work is also supported by a number of social events through the year, which are valuable ways of consulting with children and young people in a more informal way.

# 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):

### 14, 29

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

Children and young people benefit from the stability created by the timely payment of allowances and agreed expenses to their carers.

## EVIDENCE:

### NMS 29 – Allowances and Expenses

Foster carers allowances and recoverable expenses are clearly set out in the foster carers guide, which is updated annually. Payments are made directly into foster carers accounts by bank transfer. Foster carers spoken to during this inspection indicated that allowances and allowable expenses are paid correctly and at the agreed time. The agency provides regular training to foster carers to advise them of the most up to date requirements in regard of expenses and their liabilities for tax.

The agency have recently updated the foster carer assessment form, and prospective foster carers are now asked more detailed questions regarding their financial circumstances, reducing the possibility of the economic wellbeing of children and young people being adversely affected by their foster carers being in financial difficulty.

# 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):**

**2, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 32**

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

This is a very well managed agency, which has clear systems in place to monitor its performance and to develop practice and organisation based on the results of that monitoring. Foster carers and staff have excellent opportunities

for training, development, and to contribute to the development of practice throughout the agency.

## **EVIDENCE:**

### **NMS 2 – Suitability of Responsible Persons**

Greater London Fostering is a private company with three directors, who have experience in excess of that required under this standard. One director is responsible for the financial, health and safety and general administration of the agency, and has a background in local authority housing in which he supervised a number of staff.

A second director is responsible for training, quality assurance and is also advisor to the panel. This person has experience as an assistant director of Children Services and has responsibility for a number of childcare and education services. The person has an MBA qualification and is a qualified social worker.

The third director is responsible for recruitment and referrals, and is the registered manager of the fostering agency, who has since 1970 worked in a number of local authorities as a childcare social worker and team manager. This person also has experience of work in family placement and child protection social work teams, and has a childcare qualification, which is equivalent to the Certificate in Qualification in Social Work, and a management qualification.

The agency has a comprehensive database to monitor its activities, which gives the senior staff of the agency up to date information from which to assess the performance of the agency, for example the completion of visits to foster carers by supervising social workers. This system requires an electronic signature from managers, demonstrating management oversight in a timely and effective manner. This enables a pro-active management approach both in terms of developing the service, and identifying any shortfalls in performance, which can be speedily addressed.

### **NMS 16 – Organisation and Management of Staff**

Greater London Fostering has a clear management structure with all three directors having responsibility for particular areas of the agencies work. The management of the agency also consists of two senior social workers who have responsibilities for the agencies activities in North London and South London.

There are systems in place to ensure the effective assessment and approval of foster carers. Records of monthly staff supervision were seen at this inspection, and observation of practice in the office showed that managers and social work staff have good administrative support.

The agency has a proven system to ensure that reviews are undertaken on time and are of good quality. The review documentation provided to panel is comprehensive and detailed, and includes significant information on the family, a checklist of placements, assessments of individual placements by the placing social worker, supervising social worker, foster carer and where appropriate birth family. There is a health and safety audit, a written record of appropriate checks, an appraisal of the last years fostering by the foster carer and supervising social worker, a detailed report from the reviewing officer and identified targets for the next year. The reviews seen by the inspector during this inspection were of a quality that exceeds this national minimum standard.

### **NMS 17 - Experience and Qualifications of Staff and Carers**

The agency places a great emphasis on the training and development of staff and foster carers to create a learning organisation which develops and values individual staff and foster carers skills and knowledge, and seeks a continuous cycle of assessment and development of its practice. Social work staff receive twelve half development days and ten days per year training with foster carers, offering a good level of support to students placed with the agency.

New carers are recruited by positive recommendation and a clearly written assessment process, which includes all the areas as set out in national minimum standard 17.7. There is a written policy on and a strategy for the assessment of carers using the British Association of Adoption and Fostering Form F.

## **NMS 21 – Strategy for Working With and Supporting Foster Carers**

The written policies of the agency include all the matters relating to the support of foster carers as set out in national minimum standard 21.2.

The agency has encouraged and supported the development of self-help groups, and encourages foster carers to seek the support of more experienced carers in particular matters. The agency holds two residential trips a year, day trips, parties and other social activities for staff, foster carers, birth children and foster children. Where appropriate, participation in these activities has been extended to birth families. This commendable range of activities support the agencies philosophy that values the whole network of relationships that support foster placements. All the returned questionnaires from foster carers were generally positive about the support given to them by the agency.

The agency does not provide paid respite care, but carers are supported in setting up support networks consisting of other foster carers, family and friends who are assessed by the agency, so that children have respite or support from carers with whom they are familiar.

## **NMS 23 – Foster Carers Training**

The agency provides a comprehensive programme of training for foster carers. The pre-approval and induction training provided by the agency ensures that there are opportunities for new carers to benefit from the experience and knowledge of existing foster carers. Examination of foster carers records showed that annual reviews include an appraisal of foster carers training needs. The registered manager and director responsible for training stated that the effectiveness of training offered to foster carers is evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis. Training is offered at a number of venues and at different times to enable the attendance of as many foster carers as possible.

The inspector attended one training session during this inspection on the subject of taxation for foster carers. A number of foster carers spoken to during this training day spoke positively about the training that they received from the agency, and the opportunity it gave for them to network with other foster carers.

The agency's programme of foster carer training has been accredited by Middlesex University, and allows foster carers to study and achieve recognised qualifications at a level most appropriate to them.

During the past year, areas covered by training sessions, focus groups and practice workshops have included:

- Partnership with Parents and Families



- Sharing Skills in work with Parents and Families
- Safer Caring
- Induction workshop for new carers
- Making a permanent commitment to a foster child
- Listening to Children and Young People
- Promoting Children's Health
- Working with other professionals
- Consulting with Children and their Families
- Promoting Heritage and Identity
- Promoting Education
- The impact of abuse and neglect
- Fostering Allowance

### **NMS 24 – Case Records**

The agency has a written policy on case recording, and the children's guide explains that children have a right to see their files, and how they can access this right. Examinations of records kept by the agency show information as set out in Regulation 22 Schedule 2(2) in respect of each person working in the agency, and as set out in Schedule 2(3) in respect of accidents are appropriately kept. The information recorded in the register as set out in Schedule 2(1)(e) with regard to the address that a placed child moves to on leaving the placement is recorded along with all the other information required under this regulation.

The registered manager told the inspector that case records are regularly audited and a list of missing Looked After Children documentation compiled. Records seen during this inspection demonstrated that written requests from the agency to placing authorities for missing Looked After Children documentation is retained in children and young people's files. There are procedures in place to monitor the quality of recording, and any shortfalls are addressed via the supervision process or team meetings.

### **NMS 32 – Family and Friends as Carers**

This key national minimum standard is not applicable to an independent fostering agency.

# 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

<b>BEING HEALTHY</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	4

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	4
<b>6</b>	4
<b>8</b>	4
<b>9</b>	4
<b>15</b>	4
<b>30</b>	4

<b>ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	4
<b>13</b>	4
<b>31</b>	N/A

<b>MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	4
<b>11</b>	4

<b>ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>14</b>	X
<b>29</b>	4

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? **NO**

**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

**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	FS6	It is recommended that the registered persons liaise with the placing authorities to further develop the risk assessment process so that the particular risks that young people with challenging behaviour present can be fully assessed, and appropriate management strategies put in place.

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