



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **Tower Hamlets Fostering Team**

Family Placement Office

62 Roman Road

London

E2 0QJ

7th to 11th & 15th February 2005

## 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**

Tower Hamlets Fostering Team

**Address**

Family Placement Office, 62 Roman Road, London, E2  
0QJ

**Local Authority Manager**

Mr Martin Parry (Acting)

**Tel No:**

020 7364 2288

**Address**

Family Placement Office, 62 Roman Road, London, E2  
0QJ

**Fax No:**

020 7364 2161

**Email Address**

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**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 ?**

NO

**Date of last inspection**

9-6/02/04

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		7th February 2005	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		10:00 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Ms Sharon Lewis	073298
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>		Mr Hoa Khanh Chu, Vietnamese Interpreter 07/02/05 Ms Jay Khanom, Bengali Interpreter 09/02/05	
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Mr Martin Parry (Acting) Resources Service Manager	

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## INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) 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 CSCI in respect of Tower Hamlets Fostering Team. 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 CSCI 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.

Tower Hamlets Fostering Service is based in a culturally diverse London Borough, which encompasses the African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Somalian and White British communities. Almost half of the population are from minority ethnic communities, the highest proportion being of Bangladeshi origin.

The Fostering Service comprises of:

- Recruitment and Assessment Team
- Fostering Development Team.
- Kinship Care
- Training and Support Services
- Access to Resources
- Marketing and Publicity.

The Recruitment and Assessment Team recruits, assesses and prepares prospective foster carers for approval.

The Fostering Development Team aims to support foster carers through supervision. Support is provided through regular visits, weekly telephone calls, regular training sessions and support groups.

Kinship Care undertakes both roles of these teams when working with family and friends as carers.

The Access to Resources Team has a range of functions, which includes processing foster carers payments and liaising with the Fostering Development Team to match placements.

The Marketing and Publicity officer has further developed the recruitment strategy and materials to welcome applicants from diverse backgrounds; translation and interpreting services are widely available. Support Services include a Bangladeshi Resource Officer.

Comprehensive Fostering Policies and Procedures are in place. The Foster Care Charter highlights that “Children and young people who are fostered deserve the highest standards of care, and it is the responsibility of all those involved providing a high quality service.”

## 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.)

This is the agency's third inspection against the National Minimum Standards introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002. The Inspector found that the majority of the National Minimum Standards were exceeded.

Outstanding and innovative practice was evident throughout this Inspection, in line with the main objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children. The service was rooted in management continuity, well-supported foster carers and a stable, valued workforce.

Questionnaires were received from four young people and three foster carers. Four foster placements were visited and all feedback was positive. A young person stated "I get well looked after, I am spoilt. The family I am with are leading me to a good future for when I leave care". A foster carer stated "The best things are knowing that they are always there if needed. Going to training and support groups where I meet other carers give me more confidence".

This Inspection resulted in seven recommendations being made and no legal requirements. It is recognised that Tower Hamlets provides a high quality service. Recommendations are made to further enhance areas of good practice.

The Inspector would like to thank all children, foster carers and staff for their assistance and co-operation in this Inspection.

### **Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)**

#### **This standard was met**

The Statement of Purpose covers all topics as stated in Standard 1 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and is regularly reviewed. The Statement of Purpose is now available electronically and on the website, as part of a prospective foster carer's pack. An easy to read Children's Guide has been developed in age appropriate formats. The Children's Guide should be translated into Vietnamese to meet the needs of this sizeable group of young people.

### **Fitness to Provide a Fostering Service (Standards 2-3)**

#### **2 of these 2 standards were met. Standard 2 was exceeded.**

The Inspection evidenced that the fostering service is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible childcare. The Children's Resources Manager post is currently being covered by an internal Acting Manager. Interviews for this post are scheduled for the 24/02/05. The Acting Manager is commended for swiftly addressing issues identified during the Inspection and plans of action are in place to further improve the service. All managers interviewed had relevant experience and skills and had undertaken or



were completing management qualifications.

### **Management of Fostering Service (Standards 4-5)**

#### **2 of these 2 standards were exceeded.**

Tower Hamlets Fostering Service is commended for the effective and efficient management, consistent monitoring and development of the fostering service. The fostering service had a clear strategic vision linked to national priorities and objectives. This included Children's Trust Pathfinder status. An extremely comprehensive website has been developed [www.fosteringandadoption.co.uk](http://www.fosteringandadoption.co.uk). The fostering service has received internal and external awards. National recognition has resulted in winning a Department of Health, Health and Social Care Award for Outstanding Achievement. The fostering service should ensure the Council and the Home Office is formally made aware of the increasing amount of unaccompanied Vietnamese young people being accommodated.

### **Securing and promoting welfare (Standards 6-14)**

#### **All of these 9 standards were met. 8 were exceeded.**

All fostering placements were found to be nurturing and able to meet the specific needs of the children. Tower Hamlets fostering service is commended for further developing their health and safety practices, monitoring of children's health, their culturally specific child protection training, development of contact arrangements, children's consultation and additional funding available for children to pursue their interests, hobbies, educational and language needs. There is a system where all fostering households are provided with a computer. The fostering service is commended for evaluating their ability to meet the diverse needs of children, by entering into a partnership agreement to further research this issue. The Leaving Care Team has received a Charter Mark for their excellent service for young people leaving care. The matching process should detail how the proposed placement meets the child's individual needs. In addition the fostering service should ensure foster carers do not undertake placements out of their category.

### **Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers (Standards 15-23)**

#### **All of these 9 standards were exceeded.**

Tower Hamlets Fostering Service is commended for their support, training opportunities and recruitment practices for foster carers and staff. The Division has successfully passed the Investors In People (IIP) reappraisal. The fostering service has a virtually permanent, stable and valued workforce. A high quality information pack and dvd has been produced, which is available in English and Bengali. Tower Hamlets is additionally commended for their appreciation and formal recognition of foster carers. The fostering service should consider the provision of further evening training for short break carers. In addition individual training plans should be introduced for foster carers. Foster carers should additionally have access to an independent Bengali speaking source of support, during allegation investigations.

### **Records (Standards 24-25)**

#### **2 of these 2 standards were met**

Seven children's and four foster carers' files were examined. Documentation evidenced that appropriate, accessible records are kept, which are securely stored. Training courses for foster carers are available that address recording and communication information and Life history work. An audit of case files had been undertaken in January 2005. The fostering service is commended for producing carer's profiles and for ensuring foster carers sign their supervisory visit notes. The fostering service should ensure all files contain accurate information and workers sign each recorded entry to ensure accountability.

### **Premises (Standard 26)**

#### **This standard was met.**

Woodstock Terrace is the main fostering service premises. The office is in close proximity to All Saints and Poplar Docklands Light Railway stations and several bus routes. Restricted and metered parking is in operation. The Kinship Care Team is based in Norman Grove, near Roman Road. Both premises have adequate insurance, administrative, IT and communication systems.

### **Finance requirements (Standards 27-29)**

#### **All of these 3 standards were exceeded.**

Tower Hamlets Fostering Service is a financially viable Local Authority service. The fostering service is commended for the financial arrangements for control and supervision of its financial affairs and powers. The fostering service is also commended for their ability to respond financially to children's individual needs and the savings made from the increased number of in house placements. In addition to the efficient restructuring of the financial payment system to ensure prompt payment for all carers.

### **Fostering Panels (Standards 30)**

#### **This standard was met.**

The panel is constituted in line with regulations. Observation of the foster panel evidenced that good quality and fair decisions are made in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care. Prospective carers attend panel and interpreting services are offered to applicants. The interview with the Panel Chair demonstrated the continual development of the Panel. Formal quality assurance meetings should be held between the Agency Decision Maker and Panel Chair. The fostering service would benefit from an evaluation of applicants experience of panel and consideration should be given to the panel waiting area and possible refreshments.

### **Short-term breaks (Standard 31)**

#### **This standard was met.**

2004 saw the Barnardos Families Together project merge with the Fostering Development Team providing an in-house short-break service for children with disabilities. The new foster carers and transferred workers have been incorporated into the Fostering Development Team structure and a specialist worker has been attached to the Recruitment and Assessment Team. The management recognise that further development of the short-term breaks service is needed.

### **Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)**

#### **This standard was exceeded.**

Tower Hamlets fostering services is commended for its development of promoting kinship care. The good practice developed within the Kinship Care team has received national recognition. The team is currently involved in a forthcoming British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) book being produced by a leading academic. The Kinship Care team has a strategic plan for training and support and a detailed action plan of objectives. The services offered include supervision, reviews, advice, training, workshops, mentoring schemes, one to one sessions, duty service and an informative website [www.kinship-care.co.uk](http://www.kinship-care.co.uk).

## **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:

NO

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:**

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NA

**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 Commission for Social Care Inspection 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		

Lead Inspector      Sharon Lewis  
Second Inspector    \_\_\_\_\_  
Regulation Manager \_\_\_\_\_  
Date                    1<sup>st</sup> April 2005

**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 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	

### 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	FS1	The Children's Guide should be translated into Vietnamese to meet the needs of this sizeable group of young people.
2	FS4	The fostering service should ensure the Council and the Home Office is formally made aware of the increasing amount of unaccompanied Vietnamese young people being accommodated.
3	FS8	<p>The matching process should detail how the proposed placement meets the child's individual needs.</p> <p>In addition the fostering service should ensure foster carers do not undertake placements out of their category.</p>
4	FS22	It is recommended that foster carers additionally have access to an independent Bengali speaking source of support, during allegation investigations.
5	FS23	<p>The fostering service should consider the provision of further evening training for short break carers.</p> <p>In addition individual training plans should be considered for foster carers to meet their specific needs.</p>
6	FS24	The fostering service should ensure all files contain accurate information and workers sign each recorded entry to ensure accountability.
7	FS30	<p>Formal quality assurance meetings should be held between the Agency Decision Maker and Panel Chair.</p> <p>The fostering service would benefit from an evaluation of applicants experience of panel and consideration should be given to the panel waiting area and possible refreshments.</p>

\* 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	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NA
• Directors of Social services	NA
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NA
• Local Foster Care Association	NA
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• 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	YES
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	07/02/05
Time of Inspection	10:00AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	36



The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI 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.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is 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?

3

The Statement of Purpose covers all topics as stated in Standard 1 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. This includes the agency's management structure, services provided, objectives and values, relevant numbers of carers, staff, children, procedures for recruiting, approving and training carers, quality assurance systems and panel procedures.

The fostering service evidenced that the Statement of Purpose had been recently updated in January 2005. The Statement of Purpose is now available electronically and on the website as part of a prospective foster carer's pack. The agency's policies, procedures and written guidance were found to accurately reflect the Statement of Purpose.

The children's guide has been produced in two age appropriate brightly coloured, contemporary filofaxes'. The children's guide is child friendly includes information important to children, their family details, jokes, descriptions of terminology, feelings and a puzzle.

The guide for older children includes more detailed descriptions of terminology and responsibilities, self identity, health, behaviour, contact, allowances legal process, health advice, a school timetable, independent living, employment, careers and further education advice. Both contain quotes from young people, a diary, complaints information, communication standards and useful contacts including children's rights and advocacy. The children's guide was updated in January 2005 to include communications standards set by the RAP (Young people consultation) group in 2004.

The Children's Guide should be translated into Vietnamese to meet the needs of this sizeable group of young people.

## 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?

4

The fostering service evidenced that it is provided and managed by appropriately skilled management, to effectively and efficiently meet the demands of the role. Tower Hamlets is commended for the overall management of the fostering service. The Inspection evidenced that the fostering service is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible childcare.

The Children's Resources Manager post has been covered by an internal Acting Manager for the past month. Interviews for this post are scheduled for 24/02/05. The post is vacant due to a sideways move by the previous Manager. The Acting Manager has a professional social work qualification and has ten years management experience in children and families social work. The Acting Manager is currently undertaking a Masters degree in Public Sector Management.

The Acting Manager is commended for swiftly addressing issues identified during the Inspection and plans of action are in place to further improve the service. All managers interviewed had relevant experience, had undertaken or were completing management qualifications and had a commitment to providing a quality service.

### 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?

3

The Inspector was satisfied through the whole inspection process that the Acting Manager is suitable to manage the service. Corporate recruitment procedures are in place. Random selections of files were inspected and it was noted that necessary documentation was in place in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

## 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?**

4

Tower Hamlets Fostering Service is commended for the consistent monitoring and development of the fostering service. Weekly meetings are held with fostering managers in addition to meeting with other service managers.

All fostering teams have developed action plans, which are subject to staff consultation and review. All teams took the opportunity to revise their plans during 'Away Days' in 2004. Examination of team action plans and discussion with respective managers evidenced a cycle of continuous improvement and quality assurance.

There are clear roles for managers and staff and well-established lines of communication in addition to accountability between managers, staff and carers. The service has proper financial procedures and there is a reviewing procedure to keep them up to date. The fostering service informs carers, managers and staff of their responsibility to declare any possible conflicts of interest.

Tower Hamlets Fostering Service had a clear strategic vision linked to national priorities and objectives. The Children's Strategic Partnership Board had been an effective vehicle for inter-agency strategic planning and development. It had been the driver for the successful bid to become a Children's Trust Pathfinder. This had already borne fruit with the development of jointly commissioned and financed services for children with disabilities and a strong Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The fostering service is currently considering the development of a multi dimensional 'Treatment Foster Care Programme' to meet the needs of young people with complex needs or offending behaviour.

Annual Reports are presented to the Council. During the Inspection it was noted that an increasing amount of unaccompanied Vietnamese young people were being accommodated. The fostering service should ensure the Council and the Home Office is formally made aware of this issue.

<b>Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:</b>	20
<b>Death of a child placed with foster parents.</b>	0
<b>Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.</b>	0
<b>Serious illness or accident of a child.</b>	1
<b>Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.</b>	0
<b>Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.</b>	0
<b>Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.</b>	0
<b>Serious complaint about a foster parent.</b>	1
<b>Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.</b>	5
<b>Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:</b>	0
<b>Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:</b>	0

<b>Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)</b>		
<b>The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.</b>		
<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	4
<p>Tower Hamlets is commended for the effective and efficient management of their fostering service. The Acting Manger stated, " We are an ambitious division keen to improve what we believe to be an excellent fostering service. We take advice and recommendations in the spirit in which they are proffered and always aim to respond professionally and appropriately. As such we see the opportunity provided by annual CSCI inspections as key to achieving the aims of the organisation - the overall aim being to ensure the best possible outcomes for the children for whom we provide services."</p> <p>An extremely comprehensive website has been developed <a href="http://www.fosteringandadoption.co.uk">www.fosteringandadoption.co.uk</a>. Outstanding and innovative practice was evident throughout this Inspection, which was rooted in management continuity and a stable, valued workforce.</p> <p>The fostering service has received internal and external awards. National recognition has resulted in winning a Department of Health, Health and Social Care Award for Outstanding Achievement. In addition to being short-listed in the Local Government Chronicle Awards. On a wider level Tower Hamlets Social Services have received a three star rating for their excellent social care provision. This is an unprecedented achievement given the level of deprivation in the borough.</p> <p>The recent Commission for Social Care Children's Services Inspection in October 2004 further strengthened this viewpoint. The high level of morale and optimism was noted and Tower Hamlets was judged to be serving most people well with excellent capacity to improve. It was noted that the development of the Access to Resources Team, the reduced reliance on independent fostering and the establishment of a Kinship Care Team had not only reduced unit costs but also resulted in better outcomes for children.</p> <p>The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and the lines of accountability, are clearly defined. Clear arrangements are in place to identify the person in charge when the manager is absent.</p>		

## 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?
---------------------------	---------------

A total of four foster carers' homes were visited during this Inspection. Foster carers homes were found to be clean, comfortable, warm, adequately furnished and decorated. Homes were maintained to a good standard of hygiene. All placements were found to be nurturing and able to meet the specific needs of the children.

Foster carers understand that they may be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection process. All of the foster carers visited during the Inspection positively contributed to the process.

Tower Hamlets fostering service is commended for further developing their health and safety practices. The Fostering Network (of which Tower Hamlets is a corporate member) produces an excellent Health & Safety tool and this is now incorporated in the Recruitment and Assessment Team's procedures. The fostering service has adopted Childalert, an information programme on promoting safety in the home. The information is additionally available via a website and CD Rom. This programme addresses internet, mobile phone, drug and personal safety, in addition to childhood obesity.

The homes and immediate environment visited were free of avoidable hazards that might expose a child to risk of injury or harm and contain appropriate safety barriers and equipment. The foster carer's preparation and training cover health and safety issues and the carer is provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities. Foster carers confirmed that they were financially supported to provide items such as fireguards and appropriate car seats if required.

Social work have completed the necessary health and safety training. All files contained a comprehensive health and safety checklist and foster carers are additionally sent a copy of this checklist. Health and safety issues are checked at each supervisory visit.

**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?**

4

Tower Hamlets fostering service ensures that its foster carers provide care, which respects and preserves each child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background. Foster carers' preparation, training, handbook, policies and procedures incorporate the importance of valuing diversity and promoting equality.

The fostering procedures include a chapter on Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity. The policy states "This diversity adds immeasurably to the rich and vigorous cultural experience of living in Tower Hamlets. It also challenges the Council to respond effectively to complex and changing needs and to take a lead in ensuring that all groups have equal opportunities to thrive and access services, and that our young people have opportunities to succeed."

Seven standards have been developed which address identity and self-esteem, religious, cultural and linguistic background, in relation to recording and social work practice. This includes details of advocacy and support work to combat discrimination and maximise potential.

Training courses are available for foster carers to address helping children & young people to develop positive identity and self-esteem. In addition to caring for a child with a disability.

The fostering service maintains its work to address the needs of Bangladeshi foster carers, providing much support through training and supervision. The Bangladeshi resource post, continues to provide specialised support. In addition the service has worked closely with the departments African Families project.

The fostering service is commended for their commitment to evaluating their ability to meet the diverse needs of children. The service has entered into a partnership agreement with the Hadley Centre to study the experience of Black, Asian and Dual Heritage children in foster care (pathways to permanence). This will begin in March 2005. A report of this study will be submitted to the Department for Education and Skills

The fostering service ensures that each child has encouragement; equal access and opportunities, to develop and pursue her/his talents, interests and hobbies. The fostering service is commended for the additional funding available for young people in this area.

**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?**

**3**

The fostering service has developed comprehensive matching procedures. Before placing with a stranger the Access to Resource Team will ensure that there are no other alternatives to maintain a child in their own family or friends network.

Practice has have been further developed to address issues highlighted at the last Inspection. The proposal is that Out Of Hours workers will have the rota and contact arrangements of the fostering duty workers. Any referrals will go through the fostering worker, who will have an up-to-date list of fostering vacancies and knowledge of approval categories. This has already been agreed in principle with workers in the current Emergency Duty and the Resources Management Teams.

Where transracial or transcommunity placements are made, the fostering service provides the foster family with additional training, support and information to enable the child to be provided with the best possible care and to develop a positive understanding of her/his heritage. An example was seen of this where interpreting services, were set up with Language Line. With regard to emergency placements, if no suitable placement is available then the aim will be to address this issue within six weeks of the placement.

Files examined did not evidence an analysis of why the placement would meet the child's needs. A checklist form was being used, however staff were not completing the necessary notes. The matching process should detail how the proposed placement meets the child's individual needs. In addition the fostering service should ensure foster carers do not undertake placements out of their category.

Placement agreements are in place for all foster carers.



**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?**

4

Tower Hamlets fostering service is commended for their culturally specific child protection training in relation to the needs of the Somalian and Bangladeshi communities. The aim of the course being to provide a multi-agency and multi-cultural forum for considering effective intervention in families who are from a range of cultural backgrounds. Training for foster carers includes training in caring for a child who has been abused, safe caring skills, managing behaviour and recognising signs of abuse and on ways of boosting and maintaining the child's self-esteem.

The fostering procedures section 3 focuses on 'A Safe and Positive Environment' Foster care agreements and the foster carers handbook clearly highlights that corporal punishment or any other form of sanction is not acceptable. The foster carer handbook focused specifically on safe caring covering all aspects of abuse. This includes child protection procedures including recognising and responding to child abuse. Guidance is also provided for carers who are looking after children who have been sexually abused.

There are practise guidelines (section 8) for allegations against social service staff and foster carers. Allegations are dealt within in line with the London Child Protection Procedures. The agency is commended for the additional course 'Men in Foster Care', which is designed to provide male carers with strategies for minimising the risk of allegation.

Management systems are in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of all allegations of neglect or abuse of a child in foster care. The information is scrutinised regularly. A record of allegations was seen. The Acting Manager was aware of all the allegations and outcomes.

The foster carers handbook refers to bullying, the missing child policy and procedure. The fostering service evidenced that all significant events are reported to the relevant authorities. The home has an efficient system of reporting to the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

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

100

%

**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?**

4

The fostering service is commended for addressing the matter of piecemeal contact supervision arrangements. The system has been streamlined to aid contacts and a full-time contact supervisor has been appointed to offer consistency and quality.

There are clear procedures setting out how appropriate contact arrangements for each child are to be established, maintained, monitored and reviewed. The views of the child are sought and given weight in determining contact arrangements. In assessment and training of carers, the fostering service stresses the importance of foster carers helping a child to maintain appropriate contacts and covers the skills required to encourage and facilitate such contacts.

Contact arrangement procedures are clearly detailed in the foster carers' handbook. The

handbook highlights underlying principles, difficulties and arrangements. All the carers spoken to were aware of the individual contact agreements.

The Inspector was satisfied that the carers were aware of their responsibilities with regard to supporting contact visits. Case records and discussion evidenced that foster carers had developed good working relationships with birth parents and maintained appropriate professional boundaries. Foster carers were noted to facilitate positive contacts; during a foster carer visit a contact with birth mother was scheduled. Files evidenced that carers reported to the child's social worker outcomes of contact arrangements.

Transport costs are included in the foster carers' allowances. There is the facility for additional support if contact is some distance from the foster carer.

#### **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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>4</b>
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The fostering service is commended for the various methods used to involve children's consultation. Discussions with young people and their files evidenced that they were consulted on all aspects of their care.

Children and young people who foster meet once a month. The fostering service is in the process of introducing Viewpoint to fostering households. This is an online web based interactive games system, which promotes participation and consultation for young people.

Further examples included a long-standing user group involving young people looked after. There is an annual 'Speak Out' event for young people looked after. This had resulted in the publication of a set of communication standards for social workers working with looked after children. The group had additionally contributed to the development of information and publicity materials, which included the Children's Guide. Young people have been involved in the planning and development of the Leaving Care Service. In addition to participating in some staff recruitment panels.

#### **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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>4</b>
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The fostering service is commended for the improvements made in promoting the development and health of children. All foster carers have been issued with a comprehensive health advice and support manual. The fostering service now benefits from a Health Trust funded CAMHS (Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service) worker who works three days a week.

There is a dedicated team of Looked after Children nurses. The Acting Manager stated that health monitoring has increased to 80%. Files evidenced that supervising social workers additionally addressed health issues including sexual health with young people in placement.

Visits to foster carers confirmed that the service endeavours to provide as full a description as possible of the health needs of a child. In addition to clear procedures governing consent for the child to receive medical treatment. Health records were available and were examined in the foster carer's homes. Files evidenced that children's health needs were addressed in the review process and as part of the supervisory visits.

Foster carers receive basic training on health, hygiene issues and first aid, with particular emphasis on health promotion and communicable diseases. Foster carer's additionally receive core training in child development.

The fostering service clearly details the foster carer's health promotion role through training, policies and procedures and other documentation. This includes:

- registering a child with a doctor or dentist when necessary
- taking the child to any health appointments, including dental and optician appointments, when required
- helping her/him to access the services that she/he needs
- giving attention to health issues in everyday care of the child, including diet, personal hygiene, health promotion issues etc
- acting as an advocate on the child's behalf.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>4</b>
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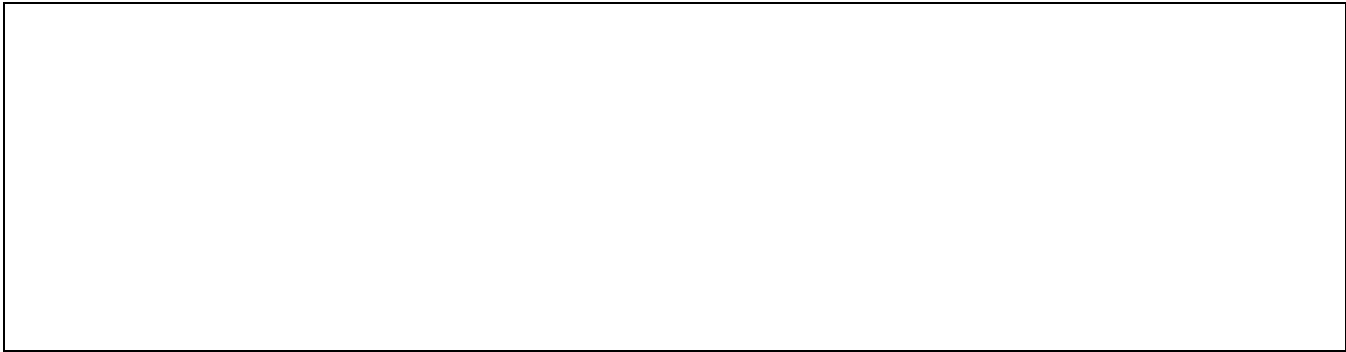
The fostering service is commended for the educational support available for children. Tower Hamlets have a system where all fostering households are provided with a computer. All foster carers have a specific education manual. There was evidence of educational plans on young people's files.

Foster carers visits and files evidenced foster carers were aware of their role with regards to school contact and creating an environment where learning is valued. This included establishing an expectation of school attendance and supporting the child's full participation in school life. During the Inspection a foster carer was observed assisting a young person with their homework.

A tuition fund is available for young people to obtain extra tuition or prepare for exams. During the Inspection additional English language support was funded for a young person who was born overseas.

The Education policy on the education of looked after children highlights the Borough's commitment to improve educational outcomes. A Looked after children Education Team provides additional support. The Acting Resources Manager stated they were unaware of any young person being permanently excluded.

Discussions with young people evidenced educational aspirations and encouragement by foster carers to achieve their goals. In addition the fostering service were noted to agree to part fund football coaching courses for young people.



**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?**

4

The fostering service is commended for their commitment to the needs of young people preparing for independence. Tower Hamlets has invested heavily in and had developed an excellent service for young people leaving care. The fostering service undertakes to help young people develop the skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult life. There is a clear leaving care policy statement within the children's service plan. The Leaving Care Team has received a Charter Mark.

The Continuing Care Scheme, operated in conjunction with the Leaving Care Service, makes provision for young people to remain with their carers beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays, where appropriate. During the Inspection a young person was approaching eighteen and continued to be supported within a nurturing foster placement.

There are clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi-independent living. Foster carers receive training and support to enable them to provide effective support and guidance

Files evidenced that foster carers encourage independent living training and Pathway Plans were in progress for young people. Young people preparing to move to independent or semi-independent living are consulted and encouraged to be actively involved in decision making processes and implementation of their Pathway Plan.

## 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?

4

Tower Hamlets has a corporate recruitment procedure, which provides clear written procedures for appointing staff, which follow good practice in safeguarding children and young people. Personnel files evidenced that all staff including agency staff are interviewed as part of the selection process and records are kept of all checks and references.

Tower Hamlets is commended for its grow your own' workforce strategy. The large proportion of social workers and front line managers drawn from the local Bangladeshi and other black and minority ethnic communities evidenced the success of the strategy. Tower Hamlets is additionally commended for the recent social work recruitment drive in India to meet the cultural needs of the community.

All social work staff have appropriate qualifications and post-qualifying courses are in progress. Discussions with staff evidenced that social work staff had a good understanding of foster care and possessed the appropriate knowledge and skills. Where unqualified staff carry out social work functions they do so under the direct supervision of qualified social workers, who are accountable for their work.

**Total number of staff of the agency:**

34

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

0

**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?**

**4**

Tower Hamlets fostering service has a transparent management structure with clear lines of accountability. The fostering service is commended for the ability to deliver a service in an efficient and effective manner. The Division has successfully passed the Investors In People (IIP) reappraisal.

Statistical information evidenced that Tower Hamlets has continued to reduce the number of independent agencies used for foster placements, by increasing their in-house provision. Systems are in place to determine, priorities and monitor workloads and assign tasks to appropriate staff. A fast track system is in place to assess prospective foster carers recommended by other foster carers.

All managers have now been in place for at least a year leading to the formation of a cohesive Resource Management Team. All Practice Manager Posts have now been filled. Team Managers and Practice Managers are enrolled on appropriate management courses.

Discussions with staff and staff files evidenced the provision of professional supervision and consultation. There is adequate administrative back up, office equipment and infrastructure to provide an efficient effective service.

All fostering service social workers understand the role of the children's social workers, and there is a clear understanding about how the fostering service social workers and the children's social workers work effectively together. Files evidenced supervising social workers liaising with relevant social services departments and attendance at childcare reviews.

Staff have a copy of:

- the policies and working practices in respect of grievances and disciplinary matters
- details of the services offered
- the equal opportunities policy
- health and safety procedures.

The Statement of Purpose outlines the equal opportunities statement "The service works to ensure that equal opportunities are incorporated into all aspects of service delivery and all prospective carers are recruited and supported on the basis of their merits and the needs of the service regardless of race, religion, class, marital status, sexual orientation or disability."

**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?**

**4**

The fostering service continues to be commended for its innovative recruitment strategy. A distinct brand for fostering has been created and the website provides potential foster carers with information and allows them to register online.

A marketing professional is in post and a recruitment action plan is scheduled which uses a range of methods to address diverse communities. These have included liaison with mosques, churches, community groups, advertising in local press, buses and bus shelters, gay and lesbian publications, conferences, festivals, pay slips and various radio stations, which have included editorial coverage on News LBC. The service is commended for their partnership working with the Asian community, outreach work with the Vietnamese community and their progressive targeting of the gay and lesbian communities.

The service has benefited throughout 2004 from the borough's recruit and retains strategy. The fostering service has a virtually permanent and stable workforce. Staffing is adequate to meet, at all times, the needs of the fostering service and is in line with the statement of purpose. Staff policies encourage retention of salaried staff including training, regular supervision, study leave, clear workloads and terms and conditions.

There is a clearly set out assessment process for carers. The fostering service is commended for their proposal to survey why prospective foster carers withdrew from the assessment process. Assessments were competency based, included observation, questions asked of birth children and evaluations of preparation groups. Case records evidenced the ability of foster carers to work in partnership with the agency.

The borough has produced a high quality information pack and dvd, which is available in English and Bengali. The information pack outlines the assessment process and competency information. It contains interviews with current foster carers describing their thoughts, experiences, apprehensions and general commonly asked questions. The Bangladeshi resource officer additionally liaises primarily with the Bangladeshi community and is available to assist with the assessment process if required.

Tower Hamlets have a recommendation scheme. Approved foster carers are able to receive £400 in vouchers of their choice, if their proposed person is approved. The fostering service is additionally commended for their flexible assistance in enabling people to foster. An example of this is assisting in moving to a larger property.

**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?**

4

Tower Hamlets fostering service is commended for their fair and competent employment practices and outstanding support available for staff and carers.

Out of hours management and support services are available for foster carers. There are management systems for carer supervision, appraisal and support. Placement breakdown meetings are held and there are plans for these meetings to be independently chaired. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy and insurance for carers, children and staff, which covers all legal requirements.

A whistle blowing policy is available and staff and foster carers evidenced an awareness of this policy. Black and Asian staff are able to seek support and advice in relation to workplace concerns regarding their career and work discrimination. An informal avenue is available through the 'Speak up in Safety' Managers of Choice Scheme.

**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?**

4

Tower Hamlets is commended for their commitment to the training needs and development of staff. The Family Placements Service has a specialist learning and professional development programme and their own training budget designed to complement the directorate training plan. Staff discussions evidenced the ability to buy in specialist training and attend relevant external training events and conferences. Staff training additionally includes agency staff.

Staff receive cash incentives to undertake and complete post qualifying child care awards. Workloads are adjusted and study leave given to staff to support the leaning process.

Staff files and discussions evidenced a corporate induction. The aim of the induction is to meet the TOPSS (Training Organisation for Personal Social Services) Induction Standards. A mentor/buddying system is additionally available for newly appointed staff.

The Draft Training Strategy highlights the borough's status as a Pathfinder Children's Trust, which builds on partnership working emphasised by the Quality Protects agenda. There is a commitment to offer jointly organised and integrated training events with Health and Education.

Staff have Personal Assessment Development plans known as PADs. These were seen during the inspection. PADs are evaluated and are discussed at the Training Strategy Groups, which are held monthly. The evaluations are used to commission required training.



**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)****All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?**

4

The fostering service is commended for operating within an accountable and supportive structure. As previously stated in Standard 16 evidence was seen of regular supervision being received by staff. Systems of supervision and appraisal feed into a strategic plan for managerial development.

Extensive fostering policies and procedures have been developed which have been updated in accordance with legislative changes and good practice. Team Meetings are held regularly and address relevant issues in relation to practice and workload management.

Staff discussions and examination of documentation evidenced that staff are properly accountable and are well supported within the fostering service. Staff had job descriptions in place.

Staff had good morale, worked well as a team and at all levels felt individually valued. The fostering service evidenced regular team away days and good system of informal support and team building. A Black workers support group is additionally available.

**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?**

4

The clear strategy for working with carers is documented, understood and commended. There are ongoing and extensive recruitment campaigns for foster carers.

Tower Hamlets is commended for their appreciation and formal recognition of foster carers, by hosting a Fostering Awards ceremony in November 2004. Achievement certificates were presented and a foster family of the year were honoured.

Support groups are held on a monthly basis in East London and Essex respectively. A Bangladeshi Support Group has been introduced since March 2004. The group meets on a quarterly basis and offers additional support for carers in Bengali. The group was set up to address the lack of attendance and language barriers, which prevented active participation in the wider support group. Discussions with staff highlighted self-directed learning where carers had addressed Confidentiality and Record Keeping, Hygiene and Cleanliness, Values, Principles, Identity and Sexuality. Future groups include an external speaker from a drugs agency and acceptable forms of discipline.

The fostering service endeavour to produce a quarterly newsletter, which is uniquely produced in English and Bengali. The newsletter highlights, training, legislative, staff and foster carer updates, activities, events and contact names and numbers. As previously mentioned the website has a specific section for Tower Hamlets foster carers and carers are able to keep in contact by email.

The role of the supervising social worker is clear both to the worker and the foster carer. Visits are undertaken once a month; with at least one unannounced visit a year. This is to supervise, offer support and identify training needs. The service has additional social work assistant posts to assist with practical issues.

Peer telephone support is in place for foster carers and regular consultation meetings are

held with management. Specific training and support is additionally available for male foster carers. The Fostering Development Team's action plan addresses the need to further increase foster carer support.

Annual review reports are prepared and are available to the Fostering Panel. There is a good system of communication between the fostering service social workers and the child's social worker.

Tower Hamlets Foster Carer Association has been re-established with assistance from an independent consultant. The association is due to have its first AGM in April 2005.

A project for the formation of a Resources Library to focus on fostering issues has been initiated. This will be completed in 2005.

**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?**

4

The fostering service is commended for the positive feedback received from foster carers regarding their supervising social workers. They were described as "brilliant". Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker and has access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice to enable her or him to provide consistent, high quality care for a child.

A comprehensive Foster Carers' handbook is provided for all foster carers. The Foster Carers' Handbook corresponds with the National Minimum Standards and is written in practical, jargon free language. The fostering service is commended for additionally producing the handbook in Bengali. All foster carers interviewed fully understood their fostering responsibilities. Foster care agreements ensure foster carers have a full understanding of what is expected of their roles.

Information about the procedures for dealing with complaints is widely available in different languages. Complaints and representations are recorded and monitored and the outcome evaluated to inform future provision of services.

An Independent Foster Care Consultant provides support to foster carers facing allegations and complaints. The aim of the service is to raise awareness and provide training to foster carers relating to situations, which may give rise to complaints and promote methods of minimising these situations. It is recommended that foster carers additionally have access to an independent Bengali speaking source of support.

**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?**

4

Tower Hamlets is commended for their commitment to meeting the training needs of their diverse group of foster carers. A Carers Training and Development Brochure has been produced which highlights one of its key aims of ensuring foster carers “receive the appropriate professional, personal support and guidance they need to offer quality placements to children and young people in their care”. The guide incorporates government guidance from the Green paper “Every Child Matters” for structured training which is linked to skills as a framework of continuing development.

Carer training events have included Preparation Training, Approved Foster Carers core training, First aid and lifting and handling, Teenage issues, HIV/AIDS awareness, Men as carers, Lifestory work, Working with asylum seeking children, Medication, Health and Safety, Sex and sexuality, Record keeping access to information, Organisational skills, Dealing with conflict, managing Aggression and Violence, Non violent communication, Health and Education issues, Separation, Attachment and Identity, Bullying, Child development, Disability Awareness, Child Protection Practice updates, Safe and effective Caring, Preparing Young People for Independence and Learning from disruptions.

Core training includes carers handbook, equalities and diversity, child protection, child development, first aid and lifting and handling (if caring for a child with a disability), safer caring practice, separation and attachment, managing difficult behaviour and life story work. There is refresher training for experienced carers, within 18 months of approval.

Training venues are now provided with crèche facilities. Foster carers can claim childcare expenses for attending training and support groups if there are no crèche facilities. Carers are able to access training by brochure or the website. Brochures are translated into Bengali or other languages on request.

Self directed online learning materials have been developed to include the European computer driving licence, an internationally recognised certificate in IT core skills. This is a six month structured and supported programme.

The fostering service is commended for providing Pre NVQ training which addresses English as a second language (ESOL), IT and study skills. The fostering service is additionally commended for their NVQ programme for foster carers and cash incentives once completed.

The fostering service plans to offer a mentoring programme for carers, distance learning and pilot preparation training for sons and daughters of prospective foster carers.

The fostering service should consider the provision of further evening training for short break carers. In addition individual training plans should be considered for foster carers to meet their specific needs. An example of this was a foster carer who had numerous placements where babies were affected by alcohol and drug misuse. This carer identified that they had not received practical training, which addressed these issues.

## 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
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Seven children's files were requested and made available to be examined for tracking purposes. Information was available with regards to the basis of the placement, the intended purpose and intended duration with details of the young people's legal status.

Documentation evidenced that appropriate, accessible records are kept, in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children. There is a written policy on case recording which establishes the purpose, format and contents of files, and clarifies what information is kept on the foster carer's files and what information is kept on the child's files.

The fostering service ensures that the foster carer knows why the child is in foster care and understands the basis for the current placement, its intended duration and purpose, and the details of the child's legal status. The fostering service gives the foster carer access to all relevant information to help the child understand and come to terms with past events

Training courses for foster carers are available that addresses recording and communication information and Life history work. The fostering service ensures that their foster carers store information in a secure manner and understand what information they are expected to keep and what information needs to be passed on to the fostering service.

### 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
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The fostering service keeps and updates separate records for staff, employed and independent/sessional, foster carers, young people, complaints and allegations. The Acting Resources Manager explained that an extension to the Access to Resources Team had assisted in improving the administrative records system.

There is a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records, and remedial action is taken when necessary. An audit of case files had been undertaken in January 2005. The fostering service is commended for producing carer's profiles and for ensuring foster carers sign their supervisory visit notes. Foster carers' files additionally had case based

supervision notes and a record of placements.

Confidential records are stored securely at all times and there is a clear policy on access. There is a written policy and procedural guidance for staff for the keeping and retention of case files ensuring that foster carers, fostered children and their parents know the nature of the records maintained and how to access them.

The system for keeping records is congruent with the Looking After Children System/Integrated Children's System. Written entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, and distinguish between fact, opinion and third party information.

Examination of files evidenced two minor shortfalls where inaccurate information was recorded. In addition there were two occasions where the assigned worker had not printed their name after a recorded entry. The fostering service should ensure all files contain accurate information and workers sign each recorded entry to ensure accountability.

In January 2005 Tower Hamlets had a total of 128 approved foster carers.

<b>Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:</b>			94
<b>Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:</b>			42
<b>Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:</b>			139
<b>Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:</b>			24
<b>Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:</b>			8
<b>Current weekly payments to foster parents Increase pending April 2005 Figures cover kinship to enhanced needs care  Minimum £</b>	125	<b>Maximum £</b>	500

## 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

Woodstock Terrace is the main fostering service premises, it was found to be suitable for the purpose. The wheelchair accessible offices are located in Poplar High Street, off the A13. The office is in close proximity to All Saints and Poplar Docklands Light Railway stations and several bus routes. Restricted and metered parking is in operation.

The premises have facilities for the secure retention of records and an appropriate security system. Records are securely stored in filing cabinets. The premises and its contents are adequately insured. The agency was found to have adequate administrative systems, including IT and communication systems. Administrative support is provided from the premises during office hours.

An Art Competition for children looked after was recently held. The resulting artwork and poems are currently on display in Woodstock Terrace.

The Kinship Care Team is based in Norman Grove, near Roman Road. The team have a range of offices including a comfortable family room. Management are aware of the need for more space, which is being formally addressed in the Accommodation Review.

## 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?

4

Tower Hamlets Fostering Service is a financially viable Local Authority service. The fostering service is commended for their ability to respond financially to children's individual needs. A bursary scheme is available to assist young people to pursue their hobbies and interests. The fostering service as previously mentioned, fund additional educational and language support including computers.

Procedures exist to manage situations of financial crisis. Regulations and guidelines imposed upon Local Authorities are complied with. Children's Trust status has resulted in shared budgets across Health, Education and Social Services for children with disabilities.

Tower Hamlets fostering service has addressed the recommendation of their best value review and has increased the number of in house placements. Substantial savings have therefore been made within the independent fostering sector.

### 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?

4

The fostering service is commended for the financial arrangements for control and supervision of its financial affairs and powers. The Access to Resources Team collates management information in relation to placement costs, trends and profiles of children in foster care and foster carers.

The Acting Resource Manager stated that there is no overspend and financial spreadsheets confirmed this. The Access to Resources Team database and related systems have helped forecast accurate spend, within budget, for 2004/05. Budgets are regularly monitored and reviewed. Spending commitments and financial forecasts are routinely produced and scrutinised.

The Access to Resources Team is additionally implementing a Costed Packages of Care system, which will link in with the council wide databases for case management and financial control.

**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?**

4

Tower Hamlets is commended for speedily and effectively restructuring the financial payment system to ensure prompt payment for all carers. Previous shortfalls resulted from the challenges presented by the transfer of the Barnardos short break carers. During the Inspection this issue was highlighted to senior management.

There is a written policy on fostering allowances. This and the current allowance levels are well publicised and provided annually to each carer. The carer receives clear information about the allowances and expenses payable and how to access them, before a child is placed. Evidence was seen that allowances are increased as recommended by the Fostering Network.

Increased payments are available for holidays and festival grants for Christmas or Eid. A retainer is paid for a named child only, which is currently £26 per week.

All payments in relation to looked after children are authorised, certified, recorded and administered through the Access to Resources team. This includes payments to in-house foster carers and external providers.

Tower Hamlets commitment to competitive fostering allowances is included in the Statement of Purpose "The true cost of caring for a foster child or young person must be met and foster carers given the opportunity to receive payment for their time, experience and skills."



## 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?

3

Tower Hamlets Fostering Panel is properly constituted and comprises of relevantly qualified and experienced people. The Panel has an Independent Chair who has over twenty years experience in adoption and experience of chairing fostering and adoption panels in other organisations.

Panel had a culturally diverse membership, with male representation. The Panel includes independent members, expertise in social care, child health, education and relevant personal experiences. The Panel has committed and effective legal, medical and agency advisers.

The Fostering Panel has clear written procedures in relation to the purpose, membership and decision-making. Panel member agreements are in place which promotes their commitment to anti-discriminatory practice.

Observation of the Panel, examination of previous panel minutes and discussion with the Panel Chair evidenced that fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively. The Inspector was satisfied 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.

The interview with the Panel Chair demonstrated the continual development of the Panel. A pre panel checklist is undertaken and pre panel meetings are now held, to ensure cases are appropriately submitted. There is recognition of the need to involve all members in discussion, greater independent membership and a need for panel papers to be presented in a more easy to read format. The Panel Chair described the Panel's strengths as being well organised, consolidated and an awareness of their role and responsibilities.

Panel members receive twice yearly training and it has included joint training with social work teams. The Panel is scheduled to undertake quality assurance training in March 2005. The Panel Chair had a pivotal role in the foster carers commendations at the Foster Carer's Event.

The agency decision maker is the Assistant Director of Social Services. Formal meetings are not held between the Agency Decision Maker and Panel Chair. The Panel Chair recognised the need to discuss quality assurance. Formal meetings should be held between the Agency Decision Maker and Panel Chair to discuss quality assurance and other issues, which promote and safeguard the welfare of children.

Prospective carers attend panel and interpreting services are offered to applicants. The

fostering service would benefit from an evaluation of applicants experience of panel. In addition consideration should be given to the panel waiting area and possible refreshments.

## 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
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2004 saw the Barnardos Families Together project merge with the Fostering Development Team providing an in-house short-break service for children with disabilities. The new foster carers and transferred workers have been incorporated into the Fostering Development Team structure and a specialist worker has been attached to the Recruitment and Assessment Team to further expand the options in this area. Birth parents remain central to the promotion of health and education needs.

A short break carer commented "I think the best things about this fostering service is that they are providing a good caring service to the children and their parents are getting some rest"

The management recognise that further development is needed in the following areas: -

- short-break carers are remunerated to the standards expected by all Tower Hamlets foster carers.

## 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?

4

Tower Hamlets fostering services is commended for its development of promoting kinship care. The team was originally set up in October 2003. Tower Hamlets is committed to ensuring that of those children unable to live at home, as many as possible are cared for within their own community and/or family. This was evidenced by examination of policies, procedures, assessments and discussions with kinship families and staff. Kinship care was noted to work extremely well in meeting the racial and cultural needs of children and young people.

The good practice developed within the Kinship Care team has received national recognition. The team is currently involved in a forthcoming British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) book being produced by a leading academic.

The Kinship Care team is sensitive to pre-existing relationships in assessing and approving family and friends as foster carers. The mechanisms are designed in a way that encourages their consideration as carers.

Staff attend Regional Kinship groups and have access to a range of specific, relevant external training.

The Kinship Care team has a strategic plan for training and support and a detailed action plan of objectives. The support and training needs for family and friends carers are assessed and met in the same way as for any other carers. Kinship Care has their own support groups, which are held every two months, which address relevant topics. These have included contact, role within social services and regular evaluations. It is proposed a further planned training day will be undertaken to involve both carers and staff.

The services offered include supervision, reviews, advice, training, workshops, mentoring schemes, one to one sessions, duty service and an informative website [www.kinship-care.co.uk](http://www.kinship-care.co.uk). The team recognise the need for informal events, a Family Day was held at the Museum of Childhood and there are plans to organise a further Fun Day in August 2005.

**PART C**

**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY**

**(where applicable)**

**Lay Assessor** \_\_\_\_\_ **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 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

NO

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

YES

**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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005, 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

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

**Public reports**

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI 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 \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 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** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

**D.3.2 I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 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** \_\_\_\_\_

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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