



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

Camden Fostering Service - Children and Families

79 Camden Road

London

NW1 9ES

23rd March 2004

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

Camden Fostering Service - Children and Families

Address

79 Camden Road, London, NW1 9ES

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

020 7497 2911

Address

79 Camden Road, London, NW1 9ES

Fax No:

Email Address

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

04/03/03

Date of Inspection Visit		23 rd March 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ms Jill Marriott	083058
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

CONTENTS

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

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

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Camden Fostering Services is a local authority service providing range of care options for children who are looked after. The fostering service is committed to providing quality foster placements and kinship care placements, to support children who for a number of reasons can't live with their birth families.

The fostering team provide five distinct services:

- Short term fostering / Task centred fostering
- Remand fostering (Challenging behaviour scheme)
- Emergency placements
- Relatives and friends as foster carers (kinship carers)
- Family link scheme (short breaks)

The fostering service aims to work in partnership with families, carers and other professionals to ensure that all young people have appropriate placements and care plans.

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.)

The following methods were used to inspect Camden Fostering Service.

1. Planning the inspection and interview with the manager. 16th February 2004
2. Interview with carers. 16th March 2004 AM, 16th March 2004 PM, 17th March 2004, 22nd March 2004.
3. Interviews with children and young people 16th March 2004, 17th March 2004, 22nd March 2004.
4. Tracking files 23rd March 2004
5. Tracking personnel files 23rd March 2004
6. Attended Social Work team meeting 10th March 2004
7. Attended Foster Carers Group 17th March 2004

The inspection took place over a five-week period starting on the 16/2/04. It found that many of the standards had been met or partially met. The overall service provided was good. Evidence was seen of the service making progress to meet all of the required standards.

Statement of Purpose. Standard 1.

Standard 1 remains partially met.

The Camden Fostering Service has a statement of purpose, which was revised in February 2004. The children's guide to the service will be completed by May 2004.

Fitness to Carry on or Manage a fostering Service.

Standards 2-3.

Both standards were fully met

In spite of the fostering team manager being fairly new in post, evidence showed that the service is managed efficiently.

Management of the Fostering Service.

Standards 4-5

Both standards were fully met.

The overall management of the service was good. Evidence was seen during the inspection of good communication and clear roles for the managers and staff. The service has adequate financial procedures in place, which are monitored on a monthly basis.

Securing and Promoting Welfare.

Standards 6-14**Of the 9 standards 8 were fully met and 1 partially met.**

The service provides good carers who offer good quality care for children placed. With regard to the standard partially met, the manager must ensure that health and safety checks are carried out on the homes of all carer's.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers. Standards 15-23**8 of the 9 standards were fully met.**

The support to staff and carers continues to improve. Training for carers has been reviewed and a revised training programme is available. Announced and unannounced visits to carers and children should take place regularly.

Records**Standards 24-25****1 standard was fully met and 1 partially.**

Recordings on files are clear and easy to read.

Files must be reviewed and all relevant information included.

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service**Standard 26****Standard fully met.**

The premises are fit for use by the fostering service.

Financial Requirements**Standards 27-29****Standards were fully met.**

The finances for the fostering service are reviewed monthly by the manager. The local authority finance department remain in control of the overall budget.

Fostering Panel**Standard 30****Standard fully met.**

The foster panel has up to date policies, procedures and practices in place.

Short term Breaks.**Standard 31.****Standard fully met**

The short-term breaks scheme is managed appropriately by the fostering service.

Family and Friends as Carers.**Standard 32****Standard fully met.**

Camden has an effective Kinship Care Scheme.

The inspector would like to thank the manager carer's and staff for their co-operation and flexibility during the inspection.

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

YES

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

YES

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:

There is one outstanding statutory requirement. Four new statutory requirements have been identified, but these are not considered substantial at this stage.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

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	
1	3(3)(a)(b) (4)	FS1	The Camden Fostering Team must develop a children's guide to the service as set out in Regulation 3. This standard has not been met and is reinstated.	31/7/03

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Jill Marriott**Signature** _____**Second Inspector** _____**Signature** _____**Locality Manager** Hannah Hanley**Signature** _____**Date** 26th April 2004

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	3(3)(a)(b) 4.	FS1	The Fostering Team must develop a children's guide to the service as set out in Regulation 3. This standard was not met and is reinstated.	31/7/03
2	8(1)(b)	FS6	The manager must ensure health and safety checks are carried out regularly in the foster carers home.	30/6/04
3	35(1)(i) (3)(a)(b)	FS22	The manager must ensure that announced and unannounced visits are made regularly to all carers.	30/6/04
4	35(3)(b) 34(3)	FS24	The manager must ensure that all files are monitored regularly and contain the information identified in standard 24.	30/6/04
5	43(1)(2)	FS25	The manager must ensure that regulation 43 notifications are sent to the relevant authorities as set out in schedule 8.	30/4/04

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	FS17	<p>It is evident that Camden Fostering Service is offering appropriate support to the social work team.</p> <p>From records and files seen it is evident that administration staff are not offered the same level of support.</p> <p>The manager must ensure that support and training is offered to the administrative staff supporting the fostering team.</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	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	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	NO
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	23/03/04
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	40.00

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

"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?

2

Camden Fostering Service has a statement of purpose. The statement of purpose has been reviewed and is available to all members of staff and carers.

The children's guide has not yet been completed. The service has provided a children's pack for children and young people this includes a range of general relevant information about fostering, which is produced by BAAF.

Information was gained from pre inspection information, returned questionnaires, discussion with the manager staff and carers.

The Manager must ensure that a children's guide to the fostering service is produced and made available to all young people living with foster carer's.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The permanent manager of the fostering team has been in post for approximately 3 months. The manager is qualified to DipSW level and has thirteen years experience of working with children four of which were at management level.

The manager has involvement in monitoring the budgets and reviews the financial situation on a monthly basis.

The inspector saw supervision files with appropriate references, Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and evidence of regular supervision. Team meeting minutes and financial information was also made available to the inspector.

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

Evidence was seen during the inspection and in the pre inspection information of the managers and the staff teams references and Criminal Records Bureau disclosures. Staff do not take up posts until all the above information has been received and references have been double-checked. The manager has four years management experience.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The staff team including the manager are all relatively new to the service. There was evidence of regular supervision over the past three months on staff records. Evidence of auditing was seen on carers and children's files. The inspector was told that all files will be audited on a three monthly basis.

The statement of purpose for the service has been given to staff and carer's, the service provides a carer's handbook and a range of training opportunities for foster carers and staff.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

10

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager has a clear job description setting out the duties and responsibilities of the post. It was evident that lines of accountability were well defined. Members of staff were aware of the arrangements in place regarding service responsibility when the manager was absent.

Evidence was gained from discussion with the manager, pre inspection information, policies and procedures and discussion with the staff team.

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?

2

Camden has a safe care policy. The inspector spoke with newly recruited and long-term carers. All appeared competent and skilled in the work they do. Carers have undergone an assessment and participated in an induction programme prior to approval.

Applications are considered by the fostering panel who forward their recommendations to the agency decision maker for approval. Carers are not approved without references and Criminal Records Bureau disclosures.

It was not evident from the files that regular safety checks are carried out in the carer's homes.

The manager must ensure that safety checks are carried out on all foster homes and recorded on the carers file.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There was evidence of carers being recruited from a range of ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The inspector met with a number of carers both in their homes and at a support group. It is evident that where possible children are placed with same race carer's. Where this is not possible the placement is planned with consideration given to all of the child's needs. Information was seen of the matching process on carer's and children's files.

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

Children's files included planning for care meeting minutes.

It was evident from files seen that children were carefully matched with carer's. Children spoken to during the inspection were happy with their placement and felt they could discuss difficulties. Information was seen on one file of support to maintain a placement with carer's from a different ethnic background.

Evidence was gained from policies and procedures and discussion with staff and carers and young people.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Camden has a child protection policy and an anti bullying policy, these are both included in the carer's handbook. All cases are discussed in the link workers supervision.

Children are able to discuss issues with their social worker and have information and telephone numbers to assist them to secure support if needed. All young people are encouraged to comment in writing on the care they receive at the foster carers annual review.

All carers are required to undertake "safe care training." Carers have to have up to date CRB disclosures.

The Child Care Planning Unit investigates Child protection concerns independently.

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?**

3

Where appropriate contact is maintained and supported by the foster carer.

Contact is agreed at the child's placement planning meeting and reviewed at Looked After Children reviews.

Information was gained from pre inspection information children's files and discussion with staff and carers.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

Where appropriate birth families are invited to Looked After Children reviews. Children are encouraged to attend reviews. The service has done a lot of work with young people to look at ways of making it easier for them to put their views forward. The service has appointed a group of young people who have assisted to develop forms and age appropriate questionnaires for young people to use for reviews and to enable them to ask questions of social workers and appropriate adults.

The children's forms and questionnaires are colourful and creative they contain a range of useful information. The forms and questionnaires are a credit to the young people and staff who have developed them.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The children's records show evidence of their health needs being met. Every effort is made to ensure children are registered with a doctor as soon as possible after placement. Carers are aware of their responsibility for ensuring all appointments with health specialists are arranged and kept.

All children's health needs are monitored as part of the Looked After Children's review.

Evidence was gained from inspection of files and records and from discussion with staff, carers and children.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Foster carers are made aware of the importance of education from the beginning of their induction into caring.

At each child's placement meeting the role of the carer is made clear with regard to education. Foster carers are provided with computers for use by the young people placed. All carers attend open evening and Personal Education Planning meetings.

Support is offered to children awaiting school placements.

Evidence was gained from files, records and discussion with staff carers and children.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Training is available for carers to prepare young people for adulthood. Once children reach their 16th birthday the Leaving Care Team become involved in the Looked after Children reviews. Carers support young people to gain independence skills appropriate to their age and ability. Young people spoken to were aware of the plans for their future. Evidence was gained from files, records and discussion with staff, carers and young people.

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?

3

There are clear recruitment and selection procedures for the appointment of staff. All members of staff have Criminal Record Bureau disclosures and references, which are checked with the referee. There are two vacant posts in the team and three locum workers. All staff including locums are recruited under the same procedures and receive the same support and supervision. Personnel files are kept in appropriately locked cabinets. Evidence was gained from staff files, pre inspection information and discussion with the manager.

Total number of staff of the agency:

10

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

6

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The manager has been in post for three months. Evidence was seen on files of regular supervision for staff during that time. Carers and children's files have been audited recently. Camden has an appropriate training programme for staff and carers. The staff-training programme is informed by the needs identified through the appraisal system. Carers spoken to during the inspection told the inspector that they received appropriate support and had access to social workers by phone over a 24-hour period. Evidence was seen of the development of a form to fill in with carer's at each home visit. The forms appear useful and included details of the young people seen during visits. From the information available it appears that the service is effectively organised. Evidence was gained from files, records, pre inspection information and discussion with staff, managers and carers.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7) The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The current staffing structure is adequate to meet the needs of the fostering service. The staff group is ethnically mixed. The team consists of five full-time permanent members of staff, three posts covered by locum staff and 2 posts are vacant.</p> <p>All social work staff receive support and regular supervision.</p> <p>From discussion with the team it was evident that it would be useful for regular support and supervision to be extended to the teams administrative staff.</p> <p>Administrative staff should also be considered to attend training and information sessions regarding relevant and new legislation.</p> <p>Camden continues to use adequate referral and assessment procedures to ensure good quality carers are recruited to meet the needs of the children. The service continues to advertise and recruit to permanent posts in the team.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from staffing records, supervision files and discussion with the manager and staff.</p>		

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7) The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Camden's policies and procedures are sound. All members of staff have appropriate job descriptions.</p> <p>Camden has a suitable out of hour's service to support carer's and young people. Prior to the recruitment of the manager, carer's said they were unhappy about the support they were receiving this has now improved. There is a whistle blowing procedure in place. There is adequate insurance cover for carers and staff.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from records, file, policies, procedures and discussion with the manager and staff.</p>		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7) There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Training for staff and carer's is adequate and appropriate. Staff training is identified in supervision and through yearly appraisals. All carers training is organised at appropriate times and a crèche is made available if necessary. Staff and carers also attend seminars to inform them of new and relevant legislation. Carers told the inspector that they had received this years training plan.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from the training programme, records, files and discussion with staff and carers.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The inspector met with the staff team during a team meeting.</p> <p>There was evidence from discussion and records seen that staff were supported by the manager. There is clear guidance available of the link workers responsibilities and accountability within the service.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6) The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carer's. The service provides regular support groups and contact by phone on a 24-hour basis. Camden is working towards all carers being visited monthly. It is evident from files and discussion with carers and staff that the situation regarding visits is improving. Carers reported that they were able to contact duty officers and out of hours workers by phone.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from files, policies, procedures, agency records and discussion with staff and carer's.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10) The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>Camden offers pre approval training and assessment for all prospective carer's. There was evidence from the support group that training fits in with the framework of equal opportunities and anti discriminatory practice. Camden fostering service has improved the location and times of the support groups to ensure all carer's have the opportunity to attend.</p> <p>Training was recorded on files.</p> <p>It was apparent from discussion with carer's, that visits by social workers have not always been regular. In particular long-term carers felt they didn't receive regular visits. One carer had just been allocated a link worker after one year. There was no evidence on files to suggest any visits were made unannounced.</p> <p>Information regarding new legislation is shared with carers on a one-to-one basis and at support groups.</p> <p>Evidence was gained from records, files and discussion with carers and staff.</p> <p>The manager must ensure that all carers are visited regularly both on announced and unannounced visits.</p>		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Assessment and induction training is provided to carers during the approval process. An on going training programme was also available for all carers. Carers were required to attend safe care, child protection and first aid training. Evidence was gained from files, records, training programmes and discussion with staff and carers.

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?

2

Carers and children's files are in need of updating.

There was a range of important information missing.

- On some files seen there was no foster care agreements
- Letters to the carers of their approval were not recorded on all files.
- Evidence of visits where children are seen by the link worker did not appear on all files seen
- Not all files had photographs of the child recorded. Information.
- Front sheets were incomplete
- One file had no recorded contact since 16/4/03
- Not all files included approval reviews.

Files did have audit sheets with identified areas of concern and the manager confirmed that the files were being reviewed and the system developed.

Evidence was gained from file tracking discussion with carers, staff and the manager.

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?

2

The inspector viewed a sample of records kept by the service. Employment records were seen and the content was satisfactory. The service has an appropriate written policy on recording information. Foster carers are offered training and advice on what they need to record on behalf of the children. Files written by carers are reviewed by link workers during routine visits. There is a policy regarding access to information, which is available to children and carer's. There are no records of notifications to the commission despite notifiable incidents being identified.

The manager must ensure that notifications identified in Standard 4, Regulation 43(1), Schedule 8 are sent to all relevant authorities within the stated timescales.

**The number of foster carers who have left Camden in the last year appears high but this represents 38 kinship carers who were recruited to care for children of family and friends in crisis only.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			147
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			149
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			154
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			53
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			51
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	157.22	Maximum £	286.44

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The premises have the appropriate equipment and space for the fostering service. The IT system is appropriate and is password protected. The service is provided on the third floor of a building with no lift, It would be impossible to employ anyone with a mobility problem in this office. All activities and events for carers are held off site. The building has adequate insurance cover under the local authority policy.

Evidence was gained from discussion with the manager and inspection of the space available in the building.

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?

3

The service budget is monitored monthly by the fostering team manager and the principal officer.

There are clear financial reporting and recording procedures. Overall responsibility for the fostering service budget remains with the Local Authority finance department.

Evidence was gained from the service budgets and discussion with the manager.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The financial system for the fostering service remains the overall responsibility of the finance department. The fostering manager is responsible for identifying overspends and creating ways of dealing with them at an early stage. All overspends or potential overspends are reported to the finance department.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Carers receive allowances and expenses to support the young people in their care. Carers spoken to during the inspection were clear about the breakdown of the allowances. Carers were aware that they could discuss with their link workers and negotiate any areas where the payment did not meet the need of the young person. All allowances are reviewed yearly. Evidence was gained from discussion with staff and information from the fostering service manager.

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

The fostering panel meets monthly. The panel has an independent chair who has the relevant skills experience and qualifications. The panel has an experienced vice chair who has working in the area of foster care for many years. The inspector saw the panel's policies, procedures and terms of reference, which appeared clear and accurate.

All panel business is recorded appropriately on the minutes, which are revisited and checked at the beginning of each panel meeting. All panel recommendations regarding complaints, issues and approvals are sent to the service decision maker for final approval. The inspector had access to panel meeting minutes

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?
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Camden currently has 15 Family Link Carers (short-breaks). Carers are recruited through the same process as all Camden carers. Children are carefully linked and are gradually introduced to the placement. The short break plan for each child is discussed with the carer, the link worker and the child's social worker. Children receiving short breaks are reviewed in the same way as all Children Looked After.

The children's families are aware that they continue to be the main carer for the child.

Evidence was gained from records and files seen and discussion with the fostering service manager, the kinship care manager and link workers.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The inspector spoke with kinship carers during the inspection. Carers said they were provided with excellent support. Kinship carers go through an assessment and induction process for a named child. All relevant checks are taken up and the placement is monitored and reviewed in the same way as other placements. Recruitment and management of Kinship carers is currently under review. The service is planning to offer a range support and training to ensure the needs of the children and carer's are met.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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 23 March 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the NCSC 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

NO

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 28th April 2004, 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>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ 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.