



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

London Borough of Ealing Fostering Service

**Fostering & Adoption
Perceval House
14-16 Uxbridge Road
Ealing
London
W5 2HL**

Lead Inspector
Mr Gavin Thomas

Announced Inspection
4th, 5th, 7th, 8th, 12th & 20th December 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	London Borough of Ealing Fostering Service
Address	Fostering & Adoption Perceval House 14-16 Uxbridge Road Ealing London W5 2HL
Telephone number	0208 825 6084
Fax number	
Email address	sheikhg@ealing.gov.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	London Borough of Ealing
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Ghazala Sheikh
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 19th October 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The fostering service of the London Borough of Ealing is located on two sites in Ealing and Acton. The service provides short - term placements, long-term placements, kinship placements, a sitting service and short term breaks for children with special needs. The service consists of a Support Team, Access to Resources Team, Recruitment Team and Administration Team. All teams have separate managers who are accountable to the Operations Manager. The Operations Manager has overall responsibility for the service. At the time of the inspection there were 15 qualified social workers, (not including the Registered Manager) and 15 unqualified social workers. There was no evidence of any significant gaps in the service during this inspection. Similarly, the recruitment and retention of foster carers with a range of skills and expertise is a continual process to ensure that the service strives to meet the needs of the children it has to foster.

Information about the service and any fees incurred can be obtained from the Local Authority

SUMMARY

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

This inspection took place over a period of six days (some of which were part days). The following formed the basis of this inspection:

- A pre-inspection meeting.
- Group discussions with managers, social work staff and other professionals.
- Discussions with the Operations Manager.
- Inspection of various records, documents and supporting evidence.
- Visits to four foster homes.
- Attendance at a foster carer support group.
- Observation of a foster panel followed by a discussion with the panel chair.

All foster carers visited demonstrated their competence and experience at different levels. Foster carers were doing exceptionally well with the way in which they were supporting the children/young people being fostered at the time of this inspection. Foster carers were organised, professional and pleasant in their approach. In two foster homes, the Inspector met with the children/young people in the presence of the foster carers. The foster carers had established positive relationships with the children/young people and ensured that the children/young people were included in discussions in an appropriate manner. The children/young people confirmed that they were happy in their placements and were doing well.

The CSCI distributed questionnaires to foster carers, children/young people and Placing Officers for the purpose of this inspection.

Five completed questionnaires were received from Foster Carers; the majority of these responses were very positive and complimentary about the fostering service:

- Three foster carers rated different aspects of the service as being "good" or "excellent". This included support, training, provisions for community activities, monitoring of the placements and education support.
- One foster carer stated that the London Borough of Ealing fostering service is doing is best for the borough and the nation. The foster carer stated that in time, they believe that this service will be one of the best in the country.
- One foster carer did not rate the service well and rated the service as being "poor" or "adequate" with regards to service provisions. The foster carer stated that the service could listen to foster carers more, limited information is given about the child at the start of the placement, adequate support is given with regards to maintaining a placement, inadequate systems were in place for networking with family and significant others and support given by the child's social worker is poor.

Ten completed questionnaires were received from children/ young people.

Nine children/young people indicated that they were satisfied with the service and their foster placements. Their comments are included within the body of the report. The following comments were also received

- One young person stated that being in care is not as negative as some people make it out to be.
- One young person did not make any positive comments about their placement or the service. The young person stated that they are not consulted about their care and future. The young person indicated that they were not happy in their placement and did not have a good relationship with their foster carers. (These comments were subsequently discussed with the Fostering Manager).

No completed questionnaires were received from Social Workers.

The Inspector takes this opportunity in thanking everyone who contributed to this inspection.

What the service does well:

The fostering service has a stable and well-established staff team who are experienced and appropriately qualified. The fostering team was not dependent on external agency staff at the time of this inspection.

The fostering service does well in keeping up to date with legislative changes for Looked After Children.

Based on evidence examined before and during the inspection and discussions with staff and foster carers, it was evident that the fostering service continues to provide a good quality service. This includes support for both children/young people and foster carers.

The fostering service is supported by a strong management team, an efficient fostering panel and a well-established Corporate Parent Committee.

What has improved since the last inspection?

There has been a range of developments since the last inspection. These include:

- A broader range of training opportunities for foster carers.
- Strategies for recruiting prospective foster carers have changed.
- A team responsible for "kinship carers" has been established.
- The foster carer handbook has been revised and updated.
- The council has created a dedicated "CRB unit".
- The council has set up a dedicated contact centre, which is still being developed.

- The new drop-in centre to replace Dawley House is still under construction but due to be opened in 2007.
- It is intended that the teams currently based in Acton will move to Percival House to join the other teams by January 2007.
- Ealing Council won an award for Education provisions for Looked After Children.
- Ealing Council has revised and updated the Personal Educational Plans.
- A Looked After Children's Nurse is now in post following a period of absence when the previous nurse retired.
- A school attendance record has now been devised and implemented.
- A higher percentage of foster carers have achieved the NVQ Level 3.
- Training opportunities for foster carers have developed.

What they could do better:

The fostering service needs to ensure that the CSCI host office is aware of all child protection strategy meetings.

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

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Good health outcomes can be demonstrated or anticipated for the majority of children who are fostered. This can be attributed to the overall agency practices. The service has developed ways in which it evaluates how it achieves good health outcomes children/young people. It uses available resources to promote and secure good health outcomes for children/young people and supports foster carers in securing a good standard of health care for children/young people.

EVIDENCE:

Children/young people's health needs are met in accordance with their assessed needs. The London Borough of Ealing has now recruited a Looked After Children's Nurse. The Nurse was working towards three main goals:

- To carry out health assessments with Looked After Children.
- To familiarise herself with current practices and procedures.
- To establish a working with health and social work professionals.
- To undertake training to deliver the "Speak Easy" project".

Details of children/young people's health needs were well documented on files examined. Supervising Social Workers continue to monitor foster carers input in meeting children/young peoples health needs at monthly visits. Young people commented in their feedback forms that they are "always" or "usually" supported and advised about being healthy.

The Inspector met with a group of professionals including the Substance Misuse Advisor, Psychologist, LAC Nurse, LAC Teacher and the LAC Education

Coordinator. These professionals continue to provide on going support and advice to children/young people and where necessary – foster carers. There were clear procedures in place for children/young people accessing the resources provided by specialist professionals.

Some foster carers had attended a ten-week behavioural training programme. This programme was designed and facilitated by the Psychologist. Foster carers spoken to who had attended this training gave very positive feedback about this course. One foster carer gave examples of how the course enabled her to work through difficult issues with a child/young person. Training identified for the future, which relates to healthy lifestyles for children/young people will include:

- Coping strategies for carers of teenagers.
- Promoting health/well-being with teenagers.
- Attachment difficulties (nine-week course).

All children/young people in foster placements have access to a GP service and primary health care treatments. Foster carers are provided with diaries to keep records of any health related appointments. Parental consent is obtained for children/young people to be given prescribed medication and urgent medical treatment.

Risk assessment processes were in place for ensuring that children/young people's health needs are appropriately met. This includes children/young people who may have a learning and/or physical disability. An example was seen whereby the fostering service supported the case for appropriate facilities to be provided in a foster carer's home to ensure the safety and well being of both the child/young person and the foster carer.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 & 30

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children/young people are placed with foster carers who have been assessed as being able to meet the child/young person's needs, ensuring the welfare of the child/young person is safeguarded.

Support services to placements are personalised to the needs of the child/young person e.g. matching. Children/young people have access to a range of support services including independent advocacy.

The fostering panel serves children/young people well and can demonstrate good outcomes for children/young people. The panel is well managed with effective membership who understands the needs of children/young people.

The panel is able to maintain independent scrutiny of the fostering service and challenge the fostering service where appropriate.

EVIDENCE:

Recruitment checks as required under Standard 3 of the National Minimum Standards and Regulation 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 were in place. Records examined confirmed this. The Operations Manager and other Managers who make up the Fostering Service are suitably qualified and experienced.

The suitability of prospective foster homes are assessed as part of the initial assessments. This includes a health and safety checklist. The suitability of foster carers homes are also monitored at monthly visits and annual reviews.

Staff spoken to explained that foster carers (prospective and approved) are given specific timescales to address any environmental issues.

The four foster homes visited were maintained to a very high standard. In one home, the foster carers had re arranged the furniture to ensure the safety of the children.

In one home, the Inspector was given a guided tour by the foster carer and one of the children/young people. This home was very spacious and furnished with good quality fixtures and furniture. The young person confirmed that they helped to choose some of the fixtures and ornamental features in their bedroom. One young person stated in their feedback form that that their foster home is a good home. They get lots of food, they have their own bedroom with personal space and hygiene is good

Matching processes in place were thorough. The Recruitment and Assessment team have now devised a marketing plan for identifying suitable foster carers for children/young people requiring long-term foster placements. Staff explained that this plan is designed to prevent placement breakdowns and to ensure that the service makes effective use of foster carers skills and experience in meeting children/young peoples assessed needs. Statistics indicate that this service has a very low percentage of placement breakdowns.

All placements are monitored by the Access to Resources Team.

Two foster carers (couple) explained that they were dissatisfied with the service with the way in which one placement was made for the following reasons:

- This was an emergency placement, which should have been terminated after two weeks. The placement continued for another for two weeks.
- Different ages were given for the young person and the placement was made outside of the foster carers approval status.
- The foster carers said there were inconsistencies with the young person's Social Worker.

Although this placement was not current, this case was discussed with the Operations Manager who will arrange for these comments to be further explored.

A different couple explained that although they had no concerns with the matching process, they were concerned with the poor service received from the Area Team for not moving two siblings on within a reasonable timescale.

The foster carers explained that as a result, this drawn out process was not within the children/young people's best interest.

All other foster carers spoken to explained that they were satisfied with the matching processes.

The fostering service was in receipt of the "All London Child Protection Procedures". In addition, local procedures were also in place. This included protocols to establish when a "Standards of Care" meeting is necessary. Social work staff were of the opinion that Standards of care meetings are becoming more evidence based and is proving to be more successful with regards to multi-agency work. The Standards of Care meetings are conducted if there are concerns with regards to safe caring practices but not necessary to instigate the child protection procedures. The fostering service continues to provide initial and on going training for staff and foster carers on child protection and safe caring procedures. Separate training on safe caring procedures is provided for family and friends as carers.

Thorough procedures were in place for monitoring child protection matters. This included statistics of each case, which are monitored by the Operations Manager. It was noted that although all child protection matters were recorded on a central file, the CSCI was not made aware of strategy meetings, which took place under the child protection procedures. The service must ensure that the CSCI host office is made aware of all child protection strategy meetings and the reasons for these meetings.

Management and senior staff confirmed that they attended a course on supervision skills and found this to be very effective. Some staff also attended a "Kinship Forum" hosted by another London Borough. Positive feedback was also given regarding this forum.

Professionals were of the opinion that the service does well in promoting the safety and well being of all children in foster care. Foster carers spoken to confirmed that the fostering team are fully supportive with regards to the support they sometimes require regarding child protection and safety matters. The feedback forms from the children/ young people indicated that they were well cared for.

Staff confirmed that there were no known issues of bullying at the time of the inspection. Staff explained that issues around bullying usually occur in School. The fostering service works closely with schools and foster carers to support children/young people in these situations. All the children who responded to the questionnaires stated that they were not being bullied

Ealing Council has now set up a CRB Unit. This unit is still being developed. The Manager of this unit and a representative from the Human Resources Department attended a discussion group for the purpose of this inspection.

Both staff explained their role in relation to their work with the fostering service and ensuring that recruitment checks are processed and carried out. All recruitment checks are verified and approved by managers of the fostering team.

All managers of the fostering team are involved in recruitment processes. All managers have also attended a two day training course on recruitment and selection.

The fostering service was not using any agency staff at the time of the inspection. There were two staff vacancies in two separate teams.

The Inspector observed a fostering panel on 20 December 2006. The panel was conducted in a very professional manner. The chairperson ensured that all members were given the opportunity to comment on all cases presented to the panel. The expertise from different panel members generated significant points of discussion. Panel members present on this occasion included the LAC Nurse, a representative from the legal department, an elected Councillor, independent membership and Social Work expertise.

The panel is to be commended for the thorough and detailed approach to all cases examined. The reports and other documentation were very well written.

The views of the panel chair indicated that the fostering service continues to do well with regards to the quality of the service for presenting prospective foster carers to the panel for approval. Equally, foster carer reviews and other matters are presented in the same way.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

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

7, 13 & 31

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The service actively seeks to recruit carers that can meet the diversity needs of the children/young people it serves.

Children/young people receive excellent additional support, which is characterized by being creative and responsive to a child/young person's individual needs.

Very good educational outcomes for children/young people are achieved and the service can demonstrate substantial added value to the child/young person's trajectory in terms of educational achievement.

EVIDENCE:

Equality and diversity matters are discussed with foster carers at initial visits and at pre and post approval visits. Foster carers are also provided with training on equality and diversity including transracial and transcultural placements.

Staff gave examples of how the fostering service links in with Ealing Council's corporate plan. This includes:

- Attending an annual conference for Black and Asian Workers.
- Shared Care (family link) access to black workers forum.

- Foster carers have been involved in a project known as Black History month.

The NVQ programme includes training on equality and diversity.

The fostering service continues to work very closely with the team who is responsible for the education of Looked After Children. These include the LAC Education Coordinator and the LAC Teachers. When necessary, the fostering service liaises directly with schools.

The fostering service has seen a significant improvement with children/young people's educational achievements within the last year. All children/young people in foster placements at the time of this inspection were receiving education. Five children/young people who, for whatever reason were not in full time education were receiving tuition. This tuition is provided for three hours per day during term time. The LAC Education Coordinator works closely with the School's Admissions panel.

Where possible, foster carers attended Personal Education Planning (PEP) meetings. The London Borough of Ealing has revised and updated the Personal Education Plans since the last inspection. Consultation with foster carers on PEP's was included in one of the support groups.

The pre approval training includes guidance and support on foster carers involvement with children/young peoples education. In addition, specific training is also provided.

The fostering service has devised and implemented a school attendance record for each child/young person in full time education. This record was devised and implemented in consultation with children/young people. This is in addition to the monitoring processes carried out the LAC Education Coordinator.

It was evident from the foster homes visited that foster carers are committed to ensuring that children/young people attend school and supported to achieve a good education. One young person stated in their feedback form that they are encouraged to do well in school to gain a good education because they want to go to University

The LAC education team are very proactive in creating new ideas with children/young people for extra curricular activities. An example given was a trip to the Science Museum.

Computers are issued to children/young people for study purposes. Computers are issued to the child/young person and not the fostering household but are still the property of the London Borough of Ealing. Requests for computers are processed via the LAC Education Coordinator. Young people are required to

sign a proforma to accept the terms and conditions of the use of the laptop once it is issued to them. This is judged to be good practice.

The fostering service, LAC Education Team and the Corporate Parent Committee work well together to support young people in further education provisions such as college and university.

Statistics indicated that the London Borough of Ealing continues to do well in supporting Looked After Children to achieve a good education. There has also been a marked improvement with the numbers of young people qualifying for university placements.

The Looked After Children education team won the "Children and Young People's Services Awards 2006 in recognition for their outstanding performance which included:

- The provision of educational support for children/young people not in school.
- The provision of extra curricular activities.
- Celebrating the children/young people's success at an annual education awards ceremony.
- The assessment and provision of tailored plans for individual children/young people.
- The team's focus on the whole range of needs of Looked After Children.

The London Borough of Ealing Corporate Parent Committee also won an award for its recognition and support for young peoples educational achievements.

The Looked After Children education team and the Corporate Parent Committee are to be congratulated for these achievements.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

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

10 & 11

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Maintaining and developing family contact and friendships are integral to the service provided.

The service is improving its participation strategy for the full and active involvement of children at every level. There are some imaginative methods of ensuring participation at all levels and new methods are under development. The effectiveness of consultation and participation is honestly valued. The findings are shared, reviewed and acted on.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service had good systems in place for monitoring contact arrangements including support for foster carers who assist with accompanying children/young people on contact visits.

Although the pre approval training for foster carers includes guidance on contact, the fostering service was in the process of exploring additional training for foster carers on supporting children/young people with contact arrangements.

Ealing Council has now set up a Contact Centre. This provision opened in April 2006 and was still in the process of being developed. Some external agency staff were being used to assist in setting up the centre. However, it is intended

that the centre would be fully operational with permanent staff within the next year.

The fostering service contact centre staff are working together to maximise consistency for the way in which contact meetings are held and managed. This includes contact centre staff attending foster carer support groups. A business plan was in place to review and monitor the work of the contact centre over the next year.

One foster carer gave examples about the breakdown in relationship between them and the sessional worker who collects the children/young people for contact meetings. The foster carer was of the opinion that the worker's conduct towards them was unreasonable. Although the matter had been discussed with the fostering service, it appeared that this matter still remained an issue for the foster carer. It was recommended that the fostering service should further explore these issues with the foster carer. Other foster carers spoken to were satisfied with the way in which contact is managed. One foster carer gave examples of their involvement with contact to ensure that it remains a successful experience for the child/young person and their birth family.

Children/young people have various options to discuss/raise any matters regarding contact. This includes discussions with foster carers, Social Workers, Corporate Parent Committee or staff at Dawley House.

All children/young people are issued with a copy of the Children's Guide at the start of their placement. Children/young people are also issued with details on how to make a complaint. Staff at Dawley House also provides advice to children/young people on how to raise any concerns or issues.

A range of consultation processes was in place. Ealing Council has been consistent this year in seeking the views of Looked After Children and Significant Others. This includes children/young people in foster placements.

The fostering service received a good response from foster carers about quality and service provision. The information obtained was linked to foster carer reviews. Currently, the fostering service issues questionnaires to foster carers and their birth children, foster children over the age of 8, Social Workers and the family link service. The fostering service was in the process of devising questionnaires for children under the age of 8 and children/young people in the older age range.

Since the last inspection, Ealing Council hosted a two-day workshop for birth children aged 5 – 12 years. The theme for the workshop was about living in a household with Looked After Children. Staff said that the workshops were well attended and the views and feedback from children/young people would be

used in conjunction with the quality review systems. The Council intends to host a similar workshop for the older age range in the New Year (2007).

The Fostering Support Team hosted a fun day for birth children aged 8 – 16 years in February 2006.

The “Me Education” is a consultation group which is run by Looked After Children for Looked After Children”. This group is facilitated at Dawley House and has now secured funding to enhance the work of the group and to provide a more professional service.

One ex care leaver in the London Borough of Ealing is currently representing the “Rainer Project” on a National level.

The fostering service is currently looking into a consultation group for Looked After Children including disabled children, which would focus on life skills.

The Corporate Parent Committee is well represented by children/young people. It was also evident that the Corporate Parenting Committee plays a major role for addressing the needs and views of Looked After Children.

Staff reported that the “Outer Limits Day” and “Rising Stars Day” were both well attended this year.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

14 & 29

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The fostering service is developing effective links with other services including the semi-independence team and leaving care team to ensure that young people approaching adulthood have access to effective and on going support. Foster carers are fully enabled through allowances and training to continue to offer a high degree of support to young people approaching adult hood in their transition towards independent living.

Allowances and expenses paid to carers support them in achieving very good outcomes for children/young people. They enable greater stability, and appropriate matching through recruitment and retention.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service now works closely with the “Outreach Team” for providing additional support for young people preparing to move on to semi or independent living. The Outreach Team was established within the last year and provides a service for young people aged 16 years and over. The team is supervised and managed separately by a member of the senior management team. The staff provides a very wide range of support and advice to young people on topics such as money management, food management, home management and healthy living. The senior member of staff responsible for the Outreach Team confirmed that young people were consulted on the Outreach Support Programme. The programme seen was very comprehensive. The Outreach Team does joint work with staff at Dawley House where young people can also access support for semi or independent living.

Foster carers continue to provide support and guidance for young people in accordance with the agreements set out in their pathway plans. The support programme facilitated by the Outreach Team is provided in accordance with the young person's pathway plan. One young person stated in their feedback form that they are supported by their foster carer to learn different living skills in preparation for moving on to semi independence.

Emergency and contingency plans were in place for young people already living in semi or independent accommodation.

The fostering service had stringent procedures in place for processing foster carers allowances. All foster carers spoken to confirmed that their allowances are paid on time. Records of all allowances paid are retained on foster carers files.

A substantial amount of work had been undertaken to review the allowances since the last inspection. This included a consultation process undertaken with foster carers between July and September 2006 with regards to the banding scheme. Out of the 126 questionnaires, 23 foster carers responded. Full reports on consultation with foster carers were available for inspection purposes.

A three tier banding system was in place. Foster carers must demonstrate their achievements to be considered for a higher band. All recommendations are presented to the foster panel for approval of foster carers to progress to a higher allowance band. In addition to the three main bands, allowances are paid for the following:

- Foster care provided under Regulation 38.
- Long-term allowance.
- Supported Lodgings.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.

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

1, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25 & 32

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

There is strong, consistent, well-qualified and experienced management.

Managers demonstrably provide good leadership to the staff team and a clear and attractive Statement of Purpose exemplifies this. Managers and all staff are approachable.

The service and business plan integrates robust monitoring and assurance systems which include effective methods and systems for staff and, carers and children/young people to be heard.

Staff and carers demonstrated their commitment to achieving best outcomes for children/young people.

There are sound policies and strategies for the development and support of kinship carers.

EVIDENCE:

A Statement of Purpose was in place. This document was revised and updated in September 2006. Elected Members had approved this document.

An information pack is issued to children/young people at the start of their placement. This includes a children's guide and leaflets on court procedures, education for looked after children, contact arrangements, health and complaints procedure. The pack also includes a summary of the statement of purpose.

There were very clear lines of accountability in place. All staff are accountable to team managers and the Operations Manager. The various teams who contribute to the fostering service were stable. All staff spoken to were very clear about their roles and responsibilities. Staff also presented a range of evidence to demonstrate some of the tasks they undertake.

The fostering support team had no vacancies. The Family Link service had a vacancy for one Support Worker. There was a good sense of teamwork with regards to the recruitment and selection process for prospective foster carers. Staff from different teams also echoed this. The Recruitment and Assessment Team are currently reviewing marketing strategies and recruiting foster carers who suitable for the needs of individual children/young people requiring long term foster placements. This is judged to be good practice. The fostering service has also invested finances for the re-branding and launch of the new marketing strategies. The recruitment team demonstrated the new images now being used for recruitment purposes. These demonstrations were impressive.

Some of the merchandise used for promoting the fostering service are:

- Wristbands.
- Frisbees.
- Tea mugs.
- Pens.
- Information packs.

The Inspector met with staff from different departments who are involved in all aspects of recruitment and assessment. These included staff who respond to initial telephone enquiries, staff who carry out initial and on going assessments.

All records examined in relation to the assessment and approval of foster carers was in order and detailed.

All staff employed by the fostering team have access to a comprehensive training program. A detailed induction training programme has also been devised for new staff to meet the specifications as required under the new CWDC Induction Standards (CIS). A record of training is maintained for all staff.

The Fostering Service is to be commended for its commitment to training opportunities for foster carers. All foster carers spoken to commented on the benefits and appropriateness of the training provided. The Training Manager demonstrated that training opportunities for foster carers have developed since the last inspection. The programme seen was comprehensive. Foster carers made particular reference to the recent training facilitated by the Psychologist. Two foster carers confirmed that they had achieved their NVQ Level 3. The foster carers feedback forms reflected the support and training available to them.

The fostering service continues to support foster carers in a variety of ways. All foster carers spoken to were very positive about the support they receive. This included the commitment from a range of staff and professionals such as the training department, management staff and non social work staff. An annual awards ceremony in recognition of foster carers commitment to the children/young people.

The Support Groups are key for keeping foster carers abreast of current practices, training and other developmental opportunities. Support groups are held monthly. Groups are held during the daytime and evenings. The Inspector attended the last support group for 2006, which was held in the evening. The atmosphere was vibrant and fun. The evening included a quiz relating to the work of the fostering service, diaries for the forthcoming year and the revised version of the foster carer handbook were issued and foster carers also received photographs of the annual awards event. Foster carers spoken to

were very positive about the fostering service in particular the support they receive from the Supervising Social Workers and the training opportunities.

The fostering service continues to operate an "Out of Hours" support system. This service is monitored on a six monthly basis. Statistics were seen to confirm this. The type of information recorded was judged to be good practice and is used by the fostering service for quality monitoring purposes.

Children's case records examined had been audited since the last inspection. All records examined were in very good order and contained all relevant information for inspection purposes.

All administrative records required for inspection purposes were in place and well maintained. These included:

- Complaints log.
- Record of allegations.
- Incidents file.

Nine of the young people who completed a feedback form stated that they knew who to speak to if they were not happy and eight said they knew how to make a complaint.

In addition to statutory records examined, staff from the various teams provided documentary evidence to demonstrate the work of the fostering service. All teams are to be commended for the quality of their work.

Supplementary evidence examined and relevant to this inspection included:

- Educational achievements and reports for Looked After Children in Ealing.
- The Semi-Independence Outreach Team and the programme provided for Care Leavers.
- DVD's illustrating the social and learning days for Looked After Children in Ealing.
- Information packs for foster carers and children/young people.
- Information for parents whose child/children are being permanently fostered.
- A guide to Special Guardianship for carers and birth parents.
- A template for children/young people's reviews in kinship placements.
- Health related information provided for children/young people including healthy eating, guidance and tips on healthy life styles, support for substance misuse and pregnancy.
- Newsletters and publications produced by Ealing Fostering and Adoption Connections.

Internal and external auditing processes were in place. The Fostering Manager presented various records to demonstrate the different types of monitoring systems in place and how the outcomes are used for service improvement.

- A team has now been established to manage Kinship placements (family and friends as carers). The team leader is accountable to the Fostering Manager. The team is responsible for undertaking assessments, providing training and support and monitoring the suitability of the placements through regular visits and annual reviews. The fostering service has now set up a dedicated team for Kinship carers. One young person in a kinship placement stated in the feedback form that they are "at their happiest" living with their grandmother. There were responses from foster carers in the feedback form in relation to kinship which said that the support for kinship carers is good in particular, the Link Social Worker. The allowances for kinship carers are less than other foster carers. They would prefer if everyone were paid equal amounts.

A guide on kinship care titled " A guide to Kinship Care and the Family and Friends Fostering Team" has been produced.

The Fostering Manager completed the Annual Quality Assurance Assessment which very clearly set out aspects of the fostering service business plan over the next twelve months. Details were also provided regarding achievements and improvements of the service since the last inspection. This was consistent with discussions with the staff team.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	4
31	4

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	3
11	4

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	3
29	4

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS9	12(2)(c)	The service must ensure that the CSCI host office is made aware of all child protection strategy meetings and the reasons for these meetings.	31/01/07

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS10	The fostering service should further consult with the foster carer who expressed concerns about the relationship between them and the sessional worker who facilitates contact.

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