



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Fostering Services (RBKC)

**Social Services Department
Westway, 140 Ladbroke Grove
North Kensington
London
W10 5ND**

Lead Inspector
Paula Eaton

Announced Inspection
11th September 2006 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Fostering Services (RBKC)
Address	Social Services Department Westway, 140 Ladbroke Grove North Kensington London W10 5ND
Telephone number	020 7598 4506
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mr Martin Fry
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 26th September 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's fostering service provides placements for children and young people with approved foster carers. The service provides long-term, short-term, short-breaks services, kinship care and parent and baby care. The service had approximately 93 fostering households at the time of this inspection.

The fostering team is based in the social services offices in Ladbroke Grove. The team is based on the first floor of the building, which is shared with other social work teams. The fostering team has a designated Team Manager and a newly appointed Practice Manager who supervise social work staff.

SUMMARY

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

This annual statutory inspection took place over five days. Time was spent in the offices of the service viewing case records, policies and procedures and interviewing staff. The Team Manager, Business Support Worker, Placements Officer, Recruitment Officer, Practice Manager, a Duty Worker, an Independent Reviewing Officer and four Social Workers were spoken to. In addition to the five days spent in the service the Fostering Panel was observed and the Chair of the panel was spoken to after the panel meeting. Two foster carers were also visited and two young people were spoken to. Questionnaires were sent out to all children over eight years of age that were being looked after by the fostering service. Twelve questionnaires were returned and the young people that completed the questionnaires were all very positive about the care they were receiving. Thirty questionnaires were sent out to foster carers of which 10 were returned. Again these were generally very positive about the service. A foster carers support group was also observed. The inspection of the private fostering arrangements in place took place alongside this inspection.

What the service does well:

The service has excellent systems in place for consulting children and young people and there was clear evidence during the inspection that children's views were being listened to and acted upon.

The service has a wide range of training available for foster carers and good support mechanisms in place.

The service also has good systems in place for monitoring the educational progress and achievements of Looked After Children.

The service has a committed and motivated workforce.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Consultation with children and young people has improved since the last inspection and the service has employed a new Looked After Children's Nurse who will be working with foster carers.

What they could do better:

The service must ensure that checks are completed for all panel members and that any exemptions or changes to a foster carer's approval status is approved and recorded.

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.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

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

EVIDENCE:

It was evident from the children's case notes viewed that the health needs of children were being assessed and met. It was also evident from the records and speaking to foster carers that health checks were taking place as required. For example appointments are made for dental checks and eye tests and foster carers ensure children are registered with a GP. The records viewed also showed that statutory medicals were taking place as required.

Foster carers are provided with regular training updates regarding health issues. Information is provided to foster carers on promoting health and working with health professionals, promoting healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. Foster carers also receive information and guidance regarding smoking, immunisations, preventing cot death, head lice, contraception and sexual health, teenage pregnancy and dealing with substance misuse.

At the time of the inspection the service was in the process of introducing a new Sex and Relationships Education policy. A new Looked After Nurse had been employed who will be involved in the implementation of this policy and other health matters affecting Looked After Children such as healthy eating. At the time of the inspection the nurse had already met with some foster carers.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30

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

EVIDENCE:

The service has a very competent Registered Manager who has many years experience working as a qualified social worker as well as extensive experience working at management level. He also has a suitable management qualification. Appropriate checks are completed for all staff members and renewed as required and any references are verified by the Human Resources team for the service.

The two foster carers who were visited were providing a warm, comfortable and safe environment for the children and young people they were looking after. The service has specific guidance relating to the accommodation provided for children and young people in foster care that covers issues such as space and privacy. Records of annual health and safety checks of foster carers homes were seen and the foster carers spoken to confirmed that these had been completed. The service provides adequate information on health and safety matters.

The service has an appropriate matching policy in place. The service has a duty worker that deals with any requests for foster carers. The duty worker that was spoken to during the inspection said that as much information as possible regarding a child is obtained before they are matched with a foster carer. If the child is known to Kensington and Chelsea social services the duty worker will have access to this information from their case notes that are maintained on a computer system. A vacancy list of available carers with a short profile is also available along with more detailed information about the carer. Therefore adequate information is available to make an appropriate match. It was evident from the records viewed and from speaking to foster carers that good matches are made wherever possible and foster carers confirmed that if a trans-racial placement was made advice and support was provided by the service. Training is also available on trans-racial placements.

The service has appropriate Child Protection policies and procedures in place. Foster carers are expected to sign a Safer Home Agreement and guidance is provided to foster carers regarding Child Protection issues and ensuring the safety and welfare of children at all times. The service also has clear procedures in place for countering bullying and for when a young person absconds from a foster carers home.

Appropriate behaviour management policies and procedures were in place and regular training is provided covering behaviour management issues. Foster carers that were spoken to were clear about what were acceptable responses to any difficult behaviour displayed by children and young people and the Foster Carers Agreement clearly stated that corporal punishment was not acceptable. A summary of complaints and allegations for the previous twelve months was seen. All of the complaints reported had been appropriately responded to within the required timescales. The service has low numbers of safer caring issues and allegations. The records seen evidenced that these issues were being appropriately responded to.

The service has robust recruitment policies and procedures in place, these are readily available to staff on the local authority's intranet. The Human Resources department in the Town Hall maintains employee records. The recruitment records for four employees were viewed; these were up to date and in order.

The service has a well-established fostering panel in place the members of which have a wide range of expertise and experience with regard to the care of children and young people. A panel meeting was observed as part of the inspection and the panel Chair was spoken to after the meeting. A variety of cases were discussed at the panel including the approval of one foster carer, the approval of a private foster carer, an appeal against a change of approval status and one deregistration of a foster carer who had resigned. A constructive discussion took place regarding each item on the agenda and recommendations were made. The information kept regarding panel members

was viewed. It was noted that not all checks had been carried out for panel members. However, there was evidence that this was in the process of being done.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

7, 13 and 31

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

EVIDENCE:

It was evident from the foster carer's support group attended that the service has approved a wide range of carers from various cultural and religious backgrounds. The assessment process includes ascertaining the views of prospective foster carers with regard to diversity issues. Foster carers are also provided with training on valuing diversity and also given support and guidance where trans-racial placements are made. It was difficult to ascertain information from the records regarding the social and leisure interests of young people. However, the two carers visited were supporting the children/young people in their care to attend and be involved in social activities.

The service strives to meet the educational needs of the Looked After Children in foster care. The service has access to advice and support from teachers and a specialist Education Support Officer. The service offers support to foster carers to help them maintain educational placements for young people. The service also has links with the Pupil Referral Unit in the borough and further day provision linked to a local children's home. There was space in the foster

homes visited for young people to study and it was evident when speaking to foster carers that they were encouraging the young people in their care to do well at school and were proud of any achievements of the young people. There was also clear monitoring of each young person's educational progress in the records viewed.

A short-breaks service is provided by the fostering service. It was evident that birth parents are encouraged to maintain a central role in making decisions regarding the care of their children in these placements where appropriate.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

10 and 11

Quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Contact arrangements are made clear and foster carers are supported to ensure that appropriate contact is maintained between children and their families. The service consults children, young people and foster carers in various different ways to ensure that their views are heard.

EVIDENCE:

The service has a clear policy on establishing, maintaining and monitoring contact arrangements. It was evident from the children's records viewed and the foster carers files that clear contact arrangements were in place and any restrictions clearly recorded. The foster carers spoken to were clear about their responsibilities with regard to supporting children and young people to maintain contact with their friends and family. Foster carers were also aware of the need to observe and report any changes noted in a child's behaviour before, during or after contact. Financial support is also provided to ensure contact arrangements are maintained.

The service has good systems in place for consultation with children and young people. Consultation forms are given to children and parents prior to annual reviews and foster carers and their own children are also consulted about the fostering task. The service has a proactive Corporate Parenting Panel in place. It was evident from the records viewed that young people are actively encouraged to attend and contribute to the panels and that their views are listened to and acted upon where appropriate.

The service was also in the process of setting up a support group for the birth children of foster carers. Staff spoken to were enthusiastic about this project and had worked hard to put together a day of activities for the children and young people. Staff were disappointed that the groups they had arranged had not been well attended but were exploring ways to improve attendance to provide additional support to the birth children of foster carers. This is another way in which the service is encouraging children and young people to speak out and express their views regarding fostering.

The service has a regular newsletter written by and for young people entitled 'Listen'. The newsletter contains useful information on various topics and young people are encouraged to contribute their ideas and views.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

29

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

EVIDENCE:

The service has a payments system in place that is adequate, however, staff find the system very time consuming to operate. Clear information is provided about the allowances and expenses available for foster carers.

The foster carers spoken to had been given clear guidance about how the allowance should be used and said that they received their payments promptly. Foster carers save money for each child placed with them.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

1, 5, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26 and 32

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

EVIDENCE:

The service has a detailed Statement of Purpose that clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the service. This document was up to date and had been approved by the Executive Director of Families and Children's services.

The service has also developed a comprehensive Children's Guide that provides detailed information for children and young people who use the service.

The Registered Manager of the service is a qualified social worker with many years experience working in children's services at a senior level. He has been in his current post for over four years. There are clear lines of accountability within the service and other team managers are available in the absence of the Registered Manager.

It was evident that there were adequate numbers of staff to meet the needs of the service. The social work staff spoken to said that their case loads were manageable and that they were supported by management if there were any issues.

The assessments for four foster carers were examined. The assessments seen were comprehensive and covered all areas of competency. The assessments had been completed within an appropriate time frame and the social workers completing the assessments had considered all areas of importance including the prospective foster carers motivation for fostering, discipline, lifestyle and child protection awareness.

The service has a satisfactory policy in place for the recruitment of foster carers. The Recruitment Officer for the service was spoken to. This member of staff is responsible for organising advertising, raising the profile of the service and expanding knowledge about fostering. At the time of the inspection the Recruitment Officer was involved in starting a new recruitment campaign with a new image and logo for the service. The service uses radio advertising, information evenings and making contact with local community groups as ways of recruiting foster carers. At the time of the inspection the Recruitment Officer said that the service was targeting White UK carers, as there was a gap in the numbers of White UK carers available to meet the needs of children. The service also maintains a log of the advertising mediums used to monitor the success of each method used.

The foster carers spoken to were aware of the role of their supervising social worker and felt supported by them. The service has a Supervision Agreement in place that ensures that both foster carers and their supervising social workers are clear about their expectations. The service has a clear training and development strategy in place for foster carers. The Practice manager spoken to had been delegated the responsibility of monitoring and adapting the

training for foster carers. The service has a detailed report format in place for foster carer annual reviews, which includes consultation with the foster carer, Looked After Children and social workers. A foster carers support group is in place and one of the meetings of the group was observed as part of the inspection. The support group was well attended and involved the Registered Manager providing information on legislation and discussing what carers would like to get from the meetings over the year ahead.

It was evident from the records viewed and from speaking to foster carers that supervising social workers were visiting foster carers at least six weekly and maintaining contact with carers in between this time to ensure that carers are supported. The foster carer's records viewed all contained a copy of their Foster Carer's Agreement that included all of the required information. However, it was noted that one foster carer's records had not been updated or an exemption form completed regarding their change in approval status. It was evident from the records viewed that unannounced visits to foster carers were taking place, the foster carers spoken to also confirmed this.

The foster carers spoken to were happy with the out of hours support provided although it was evident from the complaints information viewed that some foster carers had encountered problems getting in touch with the emergency duty team out of hours.

All foster carers are expected to attend three training sessions per year. New carers are expected to attend core courses within the first twelve months of their approval that include, Post Approval Induction, Promoting Education for Looked After Children, Health for Looked After Children, Managing Challenging Behaviour, Child Protection and Emergency First Aid for Children. The service had had some difficulties with foster carers not attending training, however, the service has now introduced a twenty-five pound fee for non-attendance. Additional training is also provided on life story work, child development, domestic violence, cross-cultural placements, managing stress and HIV awareness. The Practice Manager also said that the service was looking into other ways of foster carers accessing learning materials such as online learning. NVQ level 3 programmes are also available to foster carers. Training is monitored and reviewed as part of the annual review process.

The service has a very efficient and effective computer system in place for maintaining case records for Looked After Children. This system is easy to navigate and produces clear records that can be easily updated and monitored. The case records viewed during the inspection were all up to date and in order.

The offices of the service are satisfactory. There is adequate space and IT equipment for staff to use and records are appropriately stored. The service has adequate security measures in place. The service has adequate policies and procedures in place for assessing and supporting family and friends as carers.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

N/A

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	FS30	Schedule 1	Required checks must be carried out for all panel members as stated in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002	01/02/07

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

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