



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

**London Borough of Barking &
Dagenham Fostering Service**

Social Services Department

512a Heathway

Dagenham

Essex

RM10 7SL

2nd, 7th, 8th and 10th March 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

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

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Fostering Service

Address

Social Services Department, 512a Heathway, Dagenham, Essex, RM10 7SL

Local Authority Manager

Mr. Nigel Fordham

Tel No:

020 8227 2233

Address

Social Services Department, 512a Heathway, Dagenham, Essex, RM10 7SL

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

03/03/04

Date of Inspection Visit		2 nd , 7 th , 8 th , 10 th March 2005		ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		02:00 pm		
Name of Inspector	1	Mrs Sandra Parnell-Hopkinson	073514	
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 CSCI. 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		Mr. Nigel Fordham		

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Fostering Service is a local authority service that provides task centred, long term and kinship foster care for children and young people aged 0-18 years. The service also provides short term breaks for children with disabilities. The service is committed to providing matched placements for children and young people. Foster carers are recruited by the local authority fostering service, but there are occasions when there is a need to place children and young people with foster carers employed by Independent Fostering Agencies. These placements are monitored and reviewed by the local authority. Monitoring of "private" fostering arrangements is also undertaken by the local authority.

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.)

Prior to the inspection of the fostering service, the Commission for Social Care Inspection had undertaken an inspection of all of the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham's Children's Services. During that inspection case files for both foster carers and children/young people were inspected and the findings will be incorporated into the report for the Children's Services for the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham. This inspection did not revisit areas which formed part of the aforementioned inspection.

Only the key standards were tested on this occasion. The inspector attended a meeting of foster carers, observed the fostering panel in operation, visited the fostering service offices and spoke with staff members.

The fostering service has made improvements and foster carers spoke positively about the support they receive from a stable work force of supervising social workers. The development of the Looked After Children Health and Education Services team (LACHES) has been beneficial to both foster carers and children/young people in foster care since it has given a contact point for assistance on both health and education matters.

Whilst issues were identified during the inspection regarding the compilation of the fostering panel and the quality of reviews which should be monitored by the panel, the Inspector is pleased to report that all concerns identified were received positively with plans for addressing the concerns being put into action by the end of the inspection.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2-3)

Only Standard 3 was tested and this was fully met. The staff demonstrated a competent and professional knowledge with regard to the needs of the service and spoke positively of the management style of the service.

Management of the fostering service (Standards 4-5)

These standards were not tested on this occasion

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

Standards 6-13 were tested and all were fully met. Appropriate health and safety checks are undertaken at the homes of foster carers and all of the foster placement agreements have now been signed. Foster carers were well supported by their supervising social workers in securing and promoting the welfare of children/young people in foster care. However, this was not always true of the support for the children/young people from their social workers.

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

Standards 15, 17, 18, 20 and 21 were tested and all were fully met. All staff and foster carers had had a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure. Both Staff and foster carers received regular formal supervision. Foster carers were undertaking training to NVQ level 2, and some were able to undertake this qualification through distance learning via the internet. This innovation has been particularly helpful to those foster carers who find it difficult to attend a college because of other commitments. The LACHES team also provides a respite service for foster carers through the provision of sessional workers who will look after children for a short time, but this is not always reliable.

Records (Standards 24-25)

These standards were not tested on this occasion

Fitness of premises for use as fostering service (Standard 26)

This standard was fully met

Financial requirements (Standards 27-29)

These standards were fully met. All foster carers are made aware of their entitlements and allowances on an annual basis.

Fostering panels (Standard 30)

This standard was tested and was not met. The compilation of the panel was not in accordance with the regulations and was not quorate. There was also concerns around the quality of the reviews being presented to the panel and the quality monitoring of such reviews. It is essential that the service provider ensures that the fostering panel is always quorate and will need to review the compilation of the panel in order to ensure compliance with the regulations. Before the completion of the inspection, the Inspector was informed of the actions to be taken by the service manager to ensure future compliance.

Short-term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was fully met. Since the last inspection some short-break foster carers have been approved. It was evident from discussions with one of the staff members that all arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child when foster care is provided for short-term breaks.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard was fully met. The service provider employs a specific social worker to work with family and friends as carers (kinship care) and this worker is very committed to developing this aspect of foster care and recognises the differences between this and the traditional foster care arrangements due to family dynamics etc.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State
(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000 has been repealed.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

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	
			Requirements from previous inspections have been complied with.	

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Second Inspector _____ **Signature** _____
Regulation Manager _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	24/25	FS30	The fostering service management must ensure that full compliance is made with the compilation of panel members and that all fostering panels are quorate	Immediate & ongoing
2	26	FS30	It is the responsibility of the fostering panel to advise on the procedures under which reviews in accordance with regulation 29 are carried out by the fostering service provider and to monitor their effectiveness, and to oversee the conduct of assessments. It is essential that the quality of the reviews is monitored on a regular basis.	Immediate & ongoing

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

* 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	3
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	NO
Foster children survey	NO
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	NO
• Interview with children	NO
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	NO
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	NO
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	02/03/05
Time of Inspection	14.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	12

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This standard was not tested on this occasion.

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?	0
This standard was not tested on this occasion.		

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The local authority is currently looking to recruit to the post of the fostering manager. However, the previous manager is still responsible for this service in addition to now being the acting service manager for all placements for children and young people. Following discussions with staff the Inspector was satisfied that all persons managing the fostering service are suitable people to operate the business, and were committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.		

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?

0

This standard was not tested on this occasion

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI 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.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

Number of complaints made to CSCI 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?

0

This standard was not tested on this occasion.

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?	3
<p>The Inspector was able to have discussions with several foster carers and staff members and was satisfied that appropriate health and safety checks were undertaken at the homes of foster carers. Prior to the inspection of the fostering service, the Commission for Social Care Inspection recently undertook an inspection of all Children's Services operated by the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham. As part of that inspection both foster carers and children/young people placed in foster care met with inspectors, and the feedback was very positive from both foster carers and children/young people.</p>		

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
<p>The service was able to demonstrate an active commitment to ensuring that the children and young people are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality. The fostering service is actively engaged in recruiting foster carers from a diverse background.</p>		

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
Following the inspection in March, 2004 the fostering service has taken responsibility for completing part 2 of the placement plan. This has improved upon the matching process since it will identify gaps in the matching process, and such gaps can then be addressed through increased training and support for foster carers.		

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)		
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
From discussions with staff and foster carers the Inspector was satisfied that the fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation. Foster carers at assessment undertake the Skills to Foster training and this includes the identification and prevention of abuse, and as part of the continuous professional development of foster carers specific training is made available. As part of the CSCI's inspection of the Children's Services foster carers' files were reviewed and there was very positive feedback as to the content and condition of these files.		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

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
From discussions with the manager and staff and from a case review presented to panel, the Inspector was satisfied that the fostering service ensure that each child/young person is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships in accordance with the care plan and/or foster placement agreement. The Inspector was satisfied that the supervising social workers give support and advice to foster carers to ensure the safe management of all contact visits.		

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?	3
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During the CSCI's recent inspection of the Children's Services for the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham a group of children in foster care were spoken to and the feedback regarding the foster carers was very positive, and it was evident that the views of the children and young people are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and future. In view of the foregoing, further discussions with children and young people was not sought, but the Inspector was able to ascertain from foster carers that they did consult the children and young people in their care.

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
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The Inspector was satisfied that foster carers receive any support required to enable the children/young people in foster care to receive health care which meets the needs for physical, emotional and social development, and that children/young people are encouraged and enabled to participate in an informed way regarding decision about health needs. However, foster carers did state that whilst they receive good support etc. from their supervising social workers, this was not always the case with the social worker for the child/young person.

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
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The Inspector was satisfied that with the development of the Looked After Children Health and Education Support Team this has improved the foster carers ability to give a high priority to meeting the educational needs of the children/young people in foster care. Computers are available to children/young people and this service is supported through the LACHES team. Where there are children of compulsory school age not receiving regular education the LACHES team are involved in liaison with the school, and according to foster carers this liaison has been very much appreciated, since it has given support and encouragement to both the foster carers and the children/young people.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This standard was not tested on this occasion.

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

The manager confirmed that all staff working in the fostering service were appropriately qualified to work with foster carers, children, young people and their families. All had had a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure undertaken and all received regular formal supervision. From discussions with staff the Inspector was satisfied that there was good team interaction and support and that the service manager operates an open door policy. Necessary training is made available to staff as required. Staff appeared well supported and motivated.

Total number of staff of the agency:

15

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

1

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?

0

This standard was not tested on this occasion.

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
The Inspector was satisfied that the fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and is pleased to report that the fostering team is very stable with very little turn-over in staff, and staff morale appeared high. Whilst this has enabled good working relationships to be built up between staff and foster carers, the manager is mindful of the fact that complacency and familiarity could set in to the detriment of the service and has, therefore, instituted a system of revolving the case load of supervising social workers. The fostering service is constantly endeavouring to recruit both staff and foster carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service. The local housing is not always large enough for a family to foster, particularly if they have birth children, and this will restrict the provision of foster carers within the borough. However, foster carers outside of the borough are recruited.		

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
The Inspector was satisfied that sound employment practices and good support for staff and carers is given by the fostering service. A schedule of allowances made to foster carers is published annually and a copy is sent to every foster carer. There is also an annual function where long serving foster carers, or those deserving of special recognition, are presented with an award. All foster carers are invited to attend such functions.		

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?	0
This standard was not tested on this occasion.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
From discussions with staff and pre-inspection information submitted to the Commission, the Inspector was satisfied that staff are appropriately accountable and supported by the management team.		

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
It was evident from discussions with the foster carers, staff and management that the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. The fostering service contributes to the funding of the local fostering network group for foster carers. The fostering service also funds a corporate membership to the national Fostering Network. To enable more foster carers to obtain qualifications, the fostering service has commissioned a company to undertake distance learning, on line, with foster carers wishing to complete their NVQ level 2 and currently 7 carers are participating in this scheme. 10 other foster carers are undertaking the NVQ level 2 at local colleges. During discussions with foster carers it was apparent that the support service, currently under the management of the LACHES team, to provide respite for foster carers to enable them to attend training, functions etc. is not always reliable.		

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?	0
This standard was not tested on this occasion.		

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?

0

This standard was not tested on this occasion.

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?

0

This area was inspected as part of the recent inspection of Children's Services undertaken by the CSCI and comments and findings will be reported in the full report of Children's Services to be published by the Commission.

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?

0

This standard was not tested on this occasion.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

X

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

X

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

X

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

X

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

X

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

X

Maximum £

X

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?	
The premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.		3

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 Inspectors was satisfied that the fostering service has sufficient financial resources available to it to fulfil its obligations.

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

From discussions with foster carers and the manager, the Inspector was satisfied that the financial processes/systems of the service are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

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

It was evident from discussions with foster carers that they receive an allowance and agreed expenses which cover the cost of caring for each child or young person placed. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually and a copy of the new allowances etc. is sent to each foster carer.

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?

1

The Inspector attended the fostering panel held on the 8th March, 2005 and it was evident that the panel was not quorate as required under regulation 25 of the Fostering Regulations. Following discussions with the chair of the panel, it was evident that the numbers and designation of the panel members was not in accordance with regulation 24 (3) and (4), and that the chair of the panel was not aware that the panel had not been quorate. The Inspector met with the interim service manager on the 10th March, 2005 and is pleased to report that the non-compliance with regulations was being addressed immediately and an additional panel was being convened for the 22nd March, 2005 to review all cases which had been approved by non-quorate panels since the last inspection in March, 2004. Assurances were given that the compilation of the panel would in future comply with regulations and that this would always be quorate. During the observation of the fostering panel on the 8th March, 2005, the Inspector was not satisfied that the quality of reviews of foster carers was being properly monitored, in that certainly one review caused the Inspector to have grave concerns around the initial training and assessment of foster carers and the matching and placing of a child in foster care. Following the panel, the Inspector was able to discuss the issues emanating from the observations with the manager, and was assured that the initial training and assessment of the foster carers under review had addressed the issues, that the current placement was successful. The Inspector was advised that in order to ensure a balanced review, future reviews would still be undertaken by independent reviewing officers but that the presentation to panel would involve the supervising social workers to ensure a more balanced presentation. It is essential that independent reviewing officers are trained in valuing diversity and promoting equality to ensure positive outcomes for both the children/young people and foster carers.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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From discussions with a worker from the children with disabilities team, it was evident that some foster carers have now been recruited for the short-term breaks. Some of these services are commissioned from the independent sector in view of the current shortage of short-term break foster carers. All foster carers are assessed fully using the Form F assessments who are all presented to panel for recommendations of approval or not. The three year partnership between the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham and Parents for Children is coming to an end, but the worker spoke very highly of the value of this partnership. Discussions took place around the fostering service also registering as a domiciliary care agency, or using the services of the Authority's registered domiciliary care agency to enhance this scheme through the provision of suitably trained carers delivering respite care within the family home. The fostering service will be exploring this area. The Inspector was satisfied that the this service recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

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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From discussions with the kinship worker, the Inspector was satisfied that the fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that is made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers. There are no formal foster placement agreements and kinship carers are recommended by panel for approval for specifically named children/young people. There are occasions when the process of presentation to panel is delayed due to staff turnover within the children's social work teams.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted between 2nd – 10th March 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

NO

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 11th April 2005 , which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I _____ of _____ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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