



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

National Fostering Agency Limited

Frays Court

71 Cowley Road

Uxbridge

Middlesex

UB8 2AE

25th
& 15th
& 19th

November 2004
December 2004
January 2005
& 22nd

2nd
18th
2nd, 9th
February 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

National Fostering Agency Limited

Tel No

01895 200222

Address

Uxbridge House, 464 Uxbridge Road, Hayes, Middlesex,
UB4 0SP

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

G100000305

Name of Registered Provider

National Fostering Agency Limited

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Miss Edwinda May Beech

Date of first registration

5th August 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

29th December 2003

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

18/12/03
-3/3/04

Date of Inspection Visit		25th November 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ms Susan Woolnough-Singh	074618
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 Rob Jones (Manager)	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

1. Statement of purpose

2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service

3. Management of the fostering service

4. Securing and promoting welfare

5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers

6. Records

7. Fitness of premises

8. Financial requirements

9. Fostering panels

10. Short-term breaks

11. Family and friend carers

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the 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 National Fostering Agency Limited. 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 National Fostering Agency, formerly the Fostering Agency until October 2003, was established in 1996 as an independent fostering agency. This inspection relates to the work carried out by the London area office based in Uxbridge. There is a small South London office, which is the occasional base for staff in that area to use. The National Fostering Agency has additional branches in East Anglia and Wales. These are managed separately. The National Fostering Agency is currently in the process of expanding to the Midlands, Manchester and Yorkshire.

At the time of the Inspection, the Agency's foster carers had more than seven hundred children placed by a number of London Boroughs and Local Authorities in the counties around London. Within its range of fostering services the Agency includes the placement of unaccompanied young people seeking asylum and children with special needs. The agency also has a supported living service for young people leaving foster care and staffed mother and baby units. These services are not currently inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and do not form part of this inspection report.

There are two Directors of the National Fostering Agency. An application is being made to the National Care Standards Commission for the current Resource Manager of the London office to become the Registered Manager. The National Fostering Agency operates a 24-hour on-call duty and emergency service. Link workers are on call to their foster carers on the same basis.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

The National Fostering Agency, formally the Fostering Agency, was registered with the National Care Standards Commission in August 2003. This inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) took place between 25th November 2004 and 22nd February 2005.

The Inspector was involved in observing the fostering panel meeting, visiting foster carers and children in placement. A second inspector made one foster family visit. The lead Inspector also interviewed the training/policy coordinator, four link workers, the panel chair and senior managers within the organisation. During the course of the inspection, four foster care families were selected for case tracking. Their records were examined and three foster care families were visited in their own homes. Generally, foster carers said that they felt supported and children/young people indicated they were satisfied with their placements.

Forty children's questionnaires were sent out at random by CSCI. Of these a total of six questionnaires were returned to the Inspector. Children indicated they were supported in areas such as health, leisure and education by their foster carers and that they were consulted and asked for their opinions on some household matters. The questionnaire asks foster children to comment on sanctions for inappropriate behaviour. The comments seen by the inspector indicated that the sanctions imposed are appropriate; for instance grounding and, being 'told off' or not being allowed to watch TV.

Forty Foster Carers questionnaires were sent out at random. Of these six questionnaires were returned to the Inspector. Foster carers generally felt that they received support from the Agency and that communication was good. The only comment on areas that need to be improved was in reference to local authority social workers 'changing to much.' The questionnaires indicated that foster carers had attended a selection of training.

Towards the end of this inspection the CSCI took the decision to identify Children's Fostering Services Key Inspection Standards to be inspected at each inspection. In view of this a small number of standards were not assessed on this occasion. The requirements from the previous inspection are in place.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

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	

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	Susan Wollnough-Singh	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Angela Hunt	Signature	_____
Date	27/04/2005		

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1.	3(3) & (4)	FS1	The Children's Guide must be produced in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children/young people.	1.11.05
2	43 (1) (2)	FS9	Event notifications must be forwarded to CSCI in writing as specified in Schedule 8 Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	1.4.05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS15	Telephone inquiries should be made as well as obtaining written references.
2	FS19	A training programme should be developed to enhance the individual skills of National Fostering Agency staff.

* 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	6.50
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	NO
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	NO
• Examination of files	YES
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	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	25/11/04
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	36.75

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?

2

A Statement of Purpose is available. This was being reviewed at the time of this inspection. The Children's Guide consists of two leaflets, 'Have your say' and 'Happy and Safe.' The Inspector discussed the format of the Children's Guide with the Policy Officer. The current Guide is for the older child/young person. In the opinion of the Inspector, the Guide is not suitable for children of primary/junior school age or a child/young person who does not have English as their first Language.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The National Fostering Agency operates over three regions. There are two Directors. A new Manger is currently in post in the London region. He had been in post for approximately three months at the time of this inspection. Prior to this, he had been in post as a local authority fostering, service manager for a number of years. The Manager was due to apply to CSCI Registration Team (CRT) for registration.

The Management team for the London Region consists of the Manager, a Deputy Manager and the four-team leaders who cover the four areas within the London Region.

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

All of the staff involved in managing the National Fostering Agency are qualified Social Workers who have many years experience of working in services for children and fostering, generally within local authorities. References required for the Directors of the Agency and CRB (Criminal Record Bureau) disclosures, were obtained when the registration of the agency was carried out in 2003.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Agency demonstrated that there are clear procedures for monitoring the activities of the services provided.

A supervision system is in place, whereby team leaders are responsible for the supervision of link workers who work directly with foster carers. Link workers confirmed that they were supported in their work.

In the opinion of the Inspector, the IT System that is password protected is a very good monitoring tool. Staff at the Agency are able to input all information with regard to the process of fostering, including the monthly monitoring visits by link workers. The Inspector was able to look at records on the IT system. The records contained sufficient detail and appeared to be up to date.

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

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

1

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

This standard is met. The Inspector was able to examine the recruitment and employment records of the Manager designate. These complied with the standards and associated regulations. The Manager does not hold a similar position in another organisation. The Manager is responsible for the London region and supervises the four-team leaders for each area. A monthly management meeting takes place. There is a deputy manager, whose primary supervisory responsibility is that of the duty team.

At the time of this inspection, the manager had been in post for approximately three months and was still in the process of familiarising himself with National Fostering Agency systems.

Key staff spoken with commented that all levels of management within the organisation are accessible and open to discussion.

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

Three planned visits were made by Inspectors to foster carer's own homes. The environment in each case was deemed to be satisfactory.

The assessment process, annual reviews and link worker visits are used to ensure a safe environment for children/young people. A health and safety checklist is completed for each household. A health and safety policy is available in the foster carers handbook. Health and safety training forms part of the core training once approval has been granted.

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

The National Fostering Agency has recruited its carers from a wide range of backgrounds and ethnic minorities. The agency aims to match children/young people to carers who will have an understanding of their cultural needs.

The Statement of Purpose contains information of valuing diversity. The staff handbook covers information on topics appertaining to working with children/young people from a diverse background.

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

A team of duty officers are responsible for taking referrals and finding placements. Children/young people are referred from the London Region Local Authorities. The BAAF (British Association of Fostering and Adoption) form F1 includes matching considerations. The main considerations given to the matching process are location, age, ethnicity and religion. The Inspector was also informed that a highly important aspect of the matching process was to ensure that children's/young peoples needs can be met by the skills of the 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?**

2

Once foster carers have been approved they will attend an induction course 'skills to foster'. A core level induction course is offered. This includes sessions on bullying, management of challenging behaviour, child protection and safe caring. The foster carer's handbook contains information on 'whistle blowing' and the complaints procedure.

There is a computerised record of complaints and allegations. The Commission for Social Care Inspection must be kept informed by the agency of relevant notifications in accordance with Regulation 43 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The National Fostering Agency's log of complaints and allegations did not match with records kept at the CSCI office. The Inspector discussed the outcomes of all complaints/incidents that had been recorded with the Deputy Manager.

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

Arrangements for contact with birth families are made as part of the placement agreement. Training is available for foster carers in the core level induction course 'Working with Birth Families'. The placing authority's Social Worker and the National Fostering Agency family link worker monitor the child's welfare with regard to contact arrangements.

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

There has been no change to this standard since the last inspection. At present there is not a formal written process for ascertaining children's views about the service. Link workers will aim to talk with children/young people during their monthly link worker visits. Link workers also have a duty to interview children/young people once every three months and record the outcome of this on the agency's database.

The Children's Guide contains information on how children/young people may contact the National Fostering Agency in the case of a complaint.

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 skills to Foster' course covers information on child development and emotional development, with an emphasis on arrested development due to the circumstances of the child. Further information is contained on the Foster Carer Portfolio on common health issues, medical issues and healthy lifestyles.

The child/young person will be required to have a statutory medical once they have been placed with a foster family. The link worker monthly visit and the report address any health concerns. The ability of foster carers' to meet the health needs of children and young people placed with them is recorded in the annual review of foster carers.

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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Education Guidelines are available in the Foster Carers Portfolio. Foster carers are required to promote educational achievement and school attendance. Promoting Good Health and Education for Looked After Children is covered in the Core Level Induction Course. The ability of foster carers to meet the education needs of the children and young people placed with them are recorded in the Annual Foster Carers review.

One carer, visited by the Inspector, planned to return a questionnaire to Ofsted regarding a forthcoming school inspection. This was in response to a situation that had arisen at the school, which the carer felt it important to disclose.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)
The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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None of the children seen on this inspection were of the age to be leaving foster care or at the stage of being assisted to move onto independent living or work. The Foster Carer Portfolio contains information on Moving on, Leaving Care, and Independent Living Skills.

The young person's social worker will be responsible for ensuring the Pathways Scheme is in place for young people who are preparing to leave foster care.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a written recruitment and selection policy for The National Fostering Agency's staff. Vacancies are placed on the company's internet site or advertised through professional magazines.

The Inspector examined the files of four staff (link workers), as part of the case tracking process. The files contained all the recruitment documentation required. However, it did not appear that telephone enquiries were being made well as written references as stated in the standard. This is to be recommended.

Total number of staff of the agency:

38

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

X

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The National Fostering Agency was able to demonstrate that robust systems are in place for the assessment, approval and review of foster carers.

The National Fostering Agency has a well-staffed administrative team who have specific roles and responsibilities. There is a clear staff structure in place. It was apparent that staff are aware of their individual tasks. There is a designated Duty Team for the intake of referrals. The duty officer is instrumental in liaising with the Placing Authority Social Worker in the matching process to the point of the placement meeting. A Link Worker will be allocated once the child has been placed. There are seventeen link workers within the London Region, who are supervised by area managers. Link workers each have a caseload of approximately twenty foster carers. The staff spoken with confirmed that the appropriate levels of staff supervision were in place.

A staff manual containing policies and procedures is in place. The agency has an IT/Computer system, which is accessible to all link workers who are based at home. The system was demonstrated to the inspector and was found to be an effective resource.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)		
The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The Inspector examined in detail four foster carer files as part of the case tracking process. The files were well organised and contained all the necessary paperwork for the recruitment and selection of foster carers, through each stage of the process from recruitment to approval. The BAAF F1 forms were completed in detail and demonstrated that the assessment of prospective foster carers is conducted in a thorough manner.</p> <p>Foster carers are recruited in a variety of ways, including word of mouth and advertising in specific publications.</p>		

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>A number of policies are available with regard to employment such as equal opportunities, staff supervision, recruitment and selection and whistle blowing. The Foster Carer Portfolio contains information on good practice, policy and procedure and health and safety. The four foster carer files examined contained a health and safety questionnaire/environmental checklist.</p>		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The Inspector met with the training/policy officer to discuss training offered to foster carers and staff.</p> <p>There is an induction training programme and annual appraisal system for staff in place. The induction programme is checklist based and covers information on the tasks and knowledge necessary on joining the organisation. There did not appear to be a set training programme for staff. The Inspector was informed that all link workers were qualified Social Workers with experience in childcare and fostering services. The training officer reported that there were plans to develop training for staff and he had attended a Managers meeting for feedback on the training needs of qualified staff. Staff attend team meetings and seminars where they keep abreast of developments in the field.</p> <p>The inspector spoke with four link workers as part of the case tracking process. Link workers said that they that they had received training in their areas of work with previous employees and did not identify any particular training needs. Link workers attended some training with foster carers, such as the skills to foster course. One link worker said he/she kept updated of developments in the field of fostering.</p> <p>A recommendation has been with regard to staff development and training.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
As mentioned in previous standards, a supervision system for staff is in place. Managers may also track the progress of link workers work on the IT system. The system is used to input up to date information on contact with foster cares and any other issues that arise. During the Inspection, the Inspector observed an 'open door' policy and evidence of good communication between staff and managers.		

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
Foster carers visited confirmed that they felt supported by National Fostering Agency. Notwithstanding this, one foster carer felt she/he would like more frequent visits. Six Foster carer questionnaires were completed and returned to the CSCI. Generally, comments on support received from the agency were positive. Foster carers commented that they received advice, were supported at reviews and that communication with the agency was good.		
There is an out of hours duty system in the case of an emergency. A regular newsletter, 'Link Lines' is sent to all foster carers.		

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?	3
Foster carers receive a welcome pack and sign a Foster Carer Agreement. All Foster carers are issued with a portfolio of policies, procedures and information about the National Fostering Agency. Foster carers are allocated a link worker whom they will have contact with at least once a month, or more often if required. Foster carers commented that on the whole the Agency was accessible and supportive.		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9) The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Inspector spoke with the training co coordinator/ policy officer regarding the training offered to foster carers.		
Foster carers attend the 'Skills to Foster course'. This usually takes place prior to their approval as foster carers. This also forms part of the foster carer assessment. Any areas for further training for individual foster carers are identified on this course. Feedback from foster carers assessment will be given to the Fostering Panel.		
Once approval has been granted, foster carers are required to attend Core Training. This covers the basic elements of the fostering task such as child development, health and education, safe caring and health and safety.		

Foster carers are expected to attend three training courses a year; provided by the National Fostering Agency. The Inspector was able to look at the training profiles of four families as part of the case tracking exercise. Foster carers had attended additional training at both intermediate and advance levels. On the whole, while foster parents had attended courses together, the records examined indicated that in some cases only one foster parent/carer had attended. Two foster fathers had attended 'Making the most of men in fostering'.

The Inspector was given a demonstration of the database for foster carers training. Foster carers are sent out reminder letters prior to training events and are required to give a reason if planned training is not attended.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care, which details the nature, and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This standard is met. A sample of foster carers and children/young peoples' records were seen. These are maintained on the IT System. Recording of the link worker visits and children's reviews is kept on the IT running records. The placement authority can access documentation on individual placements, with the appropriate security safeguards in place.

Guidelines on recording are in the Foster Carer Portfolio and training on /recording and Communicating Information forms part of the Core training.

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 assessed. This standard was assessed and met at the last inspection.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

715

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

1341

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

1205

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

140

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

8

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

333

Maximum £

385

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The National Fostering Agency has moved to new premises since the last inspection. The premises are approximately ten minutes from the centre of Uxbridge. The new accommodation is smart and well maintained and is suitable for its stated purpose.

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?

0

This standard was not assessed. This standard was assessed and met at the last inspection.

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?

0

This standard was not assessed. This standard was assessed and met at the last inspection.

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?

0

This standard was not assessed. This standard was assessed and met at the last inspection.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The Inspector interviewed the Chair of the Panel; and attended the morning session of the panel to observe the process and presentation of Foster Carers for approval. The current panel structure has ten members. The panel consists of an independent chair and vice chair, two members from the National Fostering Agency, and six independent members. The Panel was managed effectively with video link presentations from link workers. A detailed written report for each foster carer presented was available. The Inspector observed a discussion, and requests for any additional information on each presentation. Panel meetings are held monthly. The panel makes recommendations to the Director of National Fostering Agency on the outcomes of the panel.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The Fostering Agency does not provide short-term breaks as defined within the standard.	9
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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?
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This standard is not applicable to the National Fostering Agency.	
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PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

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

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on <enter date(s) of inspection here> and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

No Action Plan was received.

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

N/A

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

N/A

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 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

NO

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

N/A

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

N/A

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

YES

Other: <enter details here>

N/A

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:

No Provider's Agreement was received.

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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