



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

**London Borough of Brent Childrens Services
Placement**

**Triangle House
328-330 High Road
Wembley
Middx
HA9 6AZ**

Lead Inspector
Bernard Burrell

Key Announced Inspection
5th March 2007 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	London Borough of Brent Childrens Services Placement
Address	Triangle House 328-330 High Road Wembley Middx HA9 6AZ
Telephone number	020 8937 4558
Fax number	020 8937 4520
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	London Borough of Brent
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Jan Fishwick
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 13th February 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

The Fostering Service is part of Brent Children and Families Service within the Social Services Business Group. The service consists of three teams, the Intake and Referral, Fostering Assessment and the Long-Term Fostering. Three different managers with a complement of social work, support and administrative staff manage the service from its premises in Wembley High Road, North West London.

According to the Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose, the service aims to provide safe and appropriate placements for children who are looked after by Brent. It also aims to find alternative homes within a child's extended family or with any member of their community with whom they have a special relationship.

The service also aims to work in partnership with prospective carers, children and their families, colleagues, and other professionals and agencies. It also aims to promote and develop high standards in the placement of children and avoiding all unnecessary placement moves.

The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose also stated the service aims to value a child's cultural, ethnic and religious and linguistic background. In addition, it aims to prioritise recruiting and assessing of foster carers who are most likely to meet the needs of local children who need families.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection took place week of 05 March 2007. The process was assisted with contribution from managers and staff within the fostering service, the verbal and written views of foster carers, children and young people plus the completed pre-inspection documents provided by the manager of the service.

The inspectors also reviewed various administrative and case records at the fostering service, including case records of several children, young people, foster carers and staff.

The findings of this inspection indicated that the service continues to offer a good quality and reliable service to the looked after children, young people and foster carers. The overwhelming majority of foster carers and many of the looked after children and young people reported satisfaction with the service provided by the fostering service.

The fostering service continues to develop creative ideas and plans to help enhance the quality and delivery of the service, plus promote improvements and better outcomes for the children and young people.

What the service does well:

The fostering service offers appropriate assessment of foster carers and induction to the service, including a good range of developmental training and support programmes.

Good effort is made by the fostering service to help ensure that foster carers are able to demonstrate the key competencies before and after approval as carers.

The fostering service has good system of support in place for its foster carers, including regular home visits, letters and telephone communication; plus periodic foster carer's support group meetings.

The fostering service makes good effort to consult with the foster carers and the looked after children through the annual reviews, supervisory visits, foster carer's forum, LAC reviews and survey questionnaires.

Good effort also continues to be made by the service to seek the views of the children and young people when permanent placement matching is been considered.

Good effort continues to be made to help ensure that children and young people are matched appropriately with the carers who are best able to meet their diversified assessed needs.

The health and education needs of the children and young people are given top priority and appropriate systems and action plans are in place to help monitor, promote and safeguard their welfare and well-being.

The foster carers and staff are adequately supported and have access to relevant training and development opportunities. Good monitoring strategies and procedures are in place to help ensure consistency of practice is maintained and the children and young people are safeguarded.

The organisational structure of the service and lines of responsibilities are clear, transparent and accessible to staff, foster carers and the looked after children and young people.

The fostering service has an effective panel that operates in line with local and statutory guidelines. It also operates in ways that benefit the development of the service, staff, the welfare and safety of the children and young people placed.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The fostering service has made a number of significant changes since the last inspection that have had positive impact on the way the service is planned and delivered plus how the office is operated.

They include: re-organisation of the business and administration offices at Triangle House to help create a better working environment and more space for staff and users of the service. There was also noticeable improvement in the public facilities on the ground level.

There has been improvement in the information technology with the increasing use of the Frameworki I system. The IT systems have been helping to create better management and organisation of records and documents, including reminders to help ensure that relevant updates such as CRB and medicals checks are carried out on time.

The fostering service has been making good progress to educate the foster carers about the Every Child Matters 5 Outcomes. It continues to work and incorporate the 5 ECMs across its range of services, including assessments and reviews.

Good effort has been made to involve a number of young people in the research that is aiming to understand and create better placement stability of looked after children in Brent. The views of the children and young people are taken seriously and they are given the opportunity to be part of decision -making process that affects them.

The employment and stability of the fostering service staff has made significant improvement in several areas, including completion of assessments and reviews, supervision of placements and support to foster carers and the looked after children.

The panel is more reflective of the demographics served by the fostering service. There is a good range of professional and social experiences among the panel members.

What they could do better:

There is need for improvement in the frequency of unannounced supervisory home visits to foster carers.

There is need for foster carers to be given adequate information about each child/young person to be fostered at the time of the placement meetings.

Improvement is needed in the timescale relevant checks and updates such as CRB and medicals are carried out.

There is need for summary explanation from the panel outlining the reasons for its recommendations and approvals.

Continued effort needs to be made by the fostering service to help ensure improvement and better take up of the training offered by the foster carers and back-up carers.

More training should be offered to foster carers to help ensure better and clearer understanding of the ECM 5 Outcomes and how this impact non their work.

Improvement is needed in the level of involvement and commitment by some male foster carers in cases where a husband and wife or partners were both approved as joint carers.

Review of the complaints procedure to help ensure the number of cases going to level 2 is minimised.

Closer monitoring, links and liaison is needed between the children social workers and the fostering team workers, to help ensure that planned objectives for the children and young people are shared and closely monitored, for example: pathway plans and reviews.

Employment of additional staff to help clear the backlog of foster carers review and also help ensure these are done within given timescales each year.

Review of the procedures and the nature of support given to carers who have allegations made against them, particularly where investigations are ongoing.

Take necessary action to implement the plan to deduct savings for LAC from source to help minimise the cases where a number of foster carers are not saving for the children and young people in their care.

Continued development is needed to help ensure the Kinship Team becomes more effective and there is better public education about this area of the fostering service.

Better effort should be made to streamline the volume and quality of information sent to foster carers, children and young people.

Increase play therapy and clinical psychology support for carers and LAC – 3 full-time equivalent posts are planned.

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

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

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Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

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

Children and young people's health care needs are supported and promoted by their foster carers and the health services within the borough. The Looked After Children's Nurse provides support and advice and ensures that yearly health care assessments are carried out.

EVIDENCE:

The inspectors met with the Looked After Children's Nurse and discussed the service that is offered to children and young people during their time in care both with foster carers and other resources. The nurse provided evidence of work undertaken to promote children's health care needs. She has a drop in service for children and young people to attend each week for 2 hours. There is a drugs worker who has session following the nurse, which young people can also attend.

The nurse stated that she is planning to offer additional meetings to leaving care children apart from their health care reviews. She provides social workers with additional information to give to foster carers on specialised areas as requested.

She informed the inspectors there is plan to hold another drop in session for foster carers to attend so they can have direct access for information and advice on health care matters. A pack for pregnant teenagers has been developed to support them if they decide to keep their babies. This is also available for professionals to use with teenagers.

The inspectors reviewed a sample of young people's annual health care reviews. The young people's ages ranged from 3 to 17 years. There was evidence on paper as well as on the children's Framework I that reviews are held yearly. The reviews reviewed were detailed and covered the child's needs such as diet and nutrition awareness, emotional well-being, lifestyle, education, leisure and social contacts.

The reviews were signed by those children of an age to do so. Young people's comments were recorded and an action plan for the young person, foster carers and other professionals were completed on all files. These are sent to the relevant persons for action. Young people aged 12+ also receive a copy.

The reviews were carried out by a range of professionals such as the school nurse, health visitor, the LAC nurse and paediatrician. One foster carer confirmed that her foster child attended health care reviews regularly and was in fact due to have one shortly.

The nurse also stated that there had been an improved attendance at health care reviews, assessments and other appointments by children and young people. Staff also keep foster carers informed about the appointments.

Foster carers have access to a range of training on health issues. These included courses on CAMHS, first aid for infants, attachment, separation, grief and loss, basic drug awareness, sexual health and relationships, addiction and self-harm. Additional training in attachments and promoting the emotional, social and developmental needs of Looked After Children have been booked for the coming year.

Social workers also receive health care training during their induction. The LAC nurse carries this out. The nurse also offers training to the health visitors and school nurses who carry out assessments.

Young people are also supplied with a Health Fax to record their health history. The nurse informed the inspector that she meets with the manager for Improving Outcomes for LAC and the Reviewing officers to discuss the children's health review's recommendations.

The fostering service has recognised that additional improvements in the Framework I notifications on medicals need to be done on carers 60 years and older, plus full annual medicals assessments.

The service also recognises that it needs to do more to build more effective working partnerships with other professionals to help ensure that health plans are implemented.

In addition, the service has also recognised the need for the Family Links services to provide more respite provisions for children with disabilities, plus increase the numbers of foster care placements available for disabled children.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

3,6,8,9,15

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

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

The staff working in the service are suitable. Good effort is made to recruit and employ suitable foster carers and the fostering panel is well organised and operate effectively.

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EVIDENCE:

The inspection findings indicated that the fostering service employs a range of social work, administrative and managerial staff with relevant knowledge, skills and experience in children social work and fostering.

Five fostering services staff files were reviewed. These contained all the documents as required by the Fostering Regulations. The inspectors noted that relevant staffing employment checks and references were carried out and up to date. CRB checks are renewed every three years. There is a plan by the fostering service to refine the electronic work-frameworki –used by the service to process CRB and medical checks.

All social work staff had relevant qualifications and experience plus registered with the General Social Care Council.

The fostering service seldom uses agency staff. There is a locum assessment team manager in post at the time of this inspection but plans are in place to recruit permanent staff to this post.

There is a good system of staff supervision in place to help ensure the work of the social workers is carefully monitored and in line with relevant safe caring procedures and practices.

The inspectors reviewed four case files for panel members and noted that all except one had up to date CRB checks and relevant references. The job description and specification were also missing from 3 of the panel member's employment files.

The information provided by the fostering service showed that there were just over 156 approved foster carers at the time of this inspection. The recorded evidence reviewed by the inspectors showed that the foster carers have been appropriately assessed by the fostering panel. The relevant checks and references have been taken but a few were still in the process of being renewed or updated.

The inspectors noted from foster carers review records that placements and safety monitoring have improved and appropriate systems are now in place through the Framework to help ensure the monitoring continues to be effective and consistent.

Good effort continues to be made to help ensure children and young people are placed with foster carers who are best able to meet their diversified cultural, religious, ethnic, racial and other care needs. The fostering service continues to build positive equality and diversity in its placements and assessments, including the use of interpreters and information provided in different languages. Cultural Diversity Awareness training is offered to all foster carers and individualised training has been offered for carers out of borough.

The inspectors reviewed the annual reviews of 5 foster carers. The evidence showed that foster carers competencies relating to safe caring and the protection of the children are addressed by the service. In addition, 'unsafe practices' have been looked at during the LAC reviews, foster carers reviews and the panel meetings. In one of the cases discussed at the panel meeting in March 2007, the panel requested that an announced inspection visit for a carer needed to be made. The fostering service has also recognised that continued improvement is needed in this area.

The fostering service has made good improvements in the completion of supervisory visits and reviews. The case files reviewed by the inspectors

showed good evidence of how the foster carers are working to promote and safe guard the children and young people in their care. Examples of this included: appropriate sleeping and accommodation arrangements, monitoring the use of and access to bathrooms, dress code inside the home, travelling by car physical and emotional contacts plus monitoring of visitors to the foster care homes.

In addition, the fostering service provided satisfactory evidence of how child protection investigations have been managed since the last inspection, including presentation of child protection cases to the panel for consideration. There has been a noticeable decrease in the number of children been placed on the Child Protection Register when compared to the last inspection period in 2006.

Foster care applicants and existing foster carers are given the opportunity to attend the panel meetings and explain their reasons for wanting to foster and for those already fostering- update on their experience.

The panel has made progress in ensuring there is a diversified reflection in its membership, including a member who was previous a looked after child, foster carers, medical and education advisors. Improvements continue to be made in the quality of reports coming to the panel, plus attendance by panel members.

There is plan to offer training in diversity and decision making to panel members in April 2007.

The inspectors noted that each case considered by the panel was given careful analysis and assessment of the information provided. Individual panel members were given time to state their views, concerns and recommendations.

The inspector also noted that the Every Child Matters 5 Outcomes were addressed in the assessments and reviews presented to the panel. In one example, the panel deferred a review meeting with a foster carer because of concerns about the reasons her employment was terminated with an existing employer. The panel also discussed keys issues in the review notes relating to the placement, including contact arrangements for the looked after child, out of school activities, accommodation arrangements, environmental and medical health checks.

Among the issues that came up in some of the review issues discussed by the panel were the need for the fostering service to ensure that all relevant information and documents are given to individual carers at the placement agreement meetings.

The fostering service is now offering a £1000 incentive payment to existing carers who successful recruit people to join the fostering service as carers.

The inspection findings indicated the need for summary explanations to be given explaining the reasons for the panel's recommendations and decisions

The fostering service has also recognised it needs to ensure that sexual orientation is reflected in its assessments and all other areas of its service. The service is planning to have the debate with carers and staff concerning this.

In addition, analysis of placement stability, educational achievement and teenage pregnancy will also be given greater consideration by the fostering service as part of the continued development plans

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

7,13,31

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

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

Children and young people are given positive support to reach their educational potential. Personal Education Plans are in place and the borough provides good support to help the young people achieve GCSEs and SATs.

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

EVIDENCE:

The inspectors met with the Looked After Children (LAC) Educational Coordinator and the LAC Improving Outcomes for Children Manager. The educational support provided for Looked After Children both in and out of the Borough was discussed.

The Borough has a commitment to ensure that looked after children and young people are supported to achieve a minimum target of 5 A-G grades at GCSE level. There are a number of schemes in place to support children to gain good results in GCSE's and SAT's. After school booster classes are provided for the young people in Years 8/9 and 10/11.

One of the young people who met with the inspectors stated that he was going to booster classes for his GCSE's and had found them useful. There is also investment in providing support for years 6 and 7 in terms of their SAT's. This initiative also identifies those who might fail when they have moved to senior school

There is support provided to those children who are placed out of the borough, including extra resources provided to the team to support out of borough placements. A teacher visits the young people, their school and the foster carers for a day each term to help ensure that appropriate support is in place to help the young people succeed at school.

The Borough has an annual celebration of achievement awards for all Looked After Children. This is well attended.

There is input from the team at foster carers support group meetings and discussion at the foster carers association. This offers assistance to carers who are working to help in help young people with their education. Further training in education for foster carers is planned for June 2007.

The Fostering Manager stated close links are maintained with the LAC education workers who are kept updated plus invited to the initial permanency planning meetings. More children are being placed in the borough, which means they have continuity at school and regular support from the LAC education workers.

Both staff stated that there has been a major improvement in the matching of children leading to fewer placement and educational breakdowns. There are also good links with the supervising social workers and long term fostering teams. In addition a forum is held each term for designated teachers- both primary and secondary- to share good practice and discuss issues relating to the children and young people.

There was evidence on the case records to verify that children and young people have Personal Education Plans (PEPS). The records reviewed by the inspector showed that only one foster carer had attended the last PEP meeting. One foster carer stated it was difficult at times to get to the meetings as they were held during they day when she was at work. The fostering service has recognised that improvement is still needed in the number of carers attending parent's evenings.

The inspectors met with the Family Link Scheme Senior Social Worker. The scheme is only for children with disabilities. It is part of a support network for families with the two residential respite homes and the care at home scheme run by the borough. Children who need shared care go to panel for allocation.

There are only three children placed with family link foster carers and there are four foster carers approved at present.

The care provided is day care for under 10 year olds. The social worker explained that the assessment process can take longer than the usual foster carers. This appears to be due to the complex needs of the prospective children. Training is provided for prospective carers on epilepsy, sexual health for children with disabilities, CONSENT, general awareness of social models.

There has been agreement that prospective foster carers work alongside staff in the borough's two residential respite units. This provides care for children with learning and physical disabilities. This experience forms part of their Form F assessment.

The Family Link Service is under resourced at present with only one person to carry out the assessments and some other work. There are plans to recruit additional staff to the post. Information evenings are held as well as adverts in the fostering newsletter, the local paper and the Brent magazine to raise awareness about shared care.

The Fostering Team Manager stated that the plan is to develop the Family Link Service but also "to understand the demographics of Brent in relation to foster carer recruitment for disabled children and appropriate housing needs."

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

10,11

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

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

Good effort is made to promote positive and beneficial contacts for the children and young people. Improvements have been made in the consultation process between the service and all stakeholders.

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EVIDENCE:

The evidence and information provided by the fostering service, plus discussions with the children, young people and foster carers indicated that good effort continues to be made to help ensure positive emotional and social development for the fostered children and young people.

The foster carers have received training on understanding contact and issues for children resulting from contact. Issues raised at contacts are recorded and addressed where necessary.

The evidence reviewed in the annual LAC and supervisory reviews showed that the children and young people are consulted about their experience of the service and in their foster care homes. The children and young people who communicated with the inspectors reported positively about their experience with staff in the fostering service.

Evidence was also provided by the fostering service about the disability awareness training and promotion of opportunities for disabled children to make contributions to the service and the things that impact on their lives and communities.

The evidence provided by the service and reviewed by the inspectors showed that the children and young people are also supported and encouraged to be part of the LAC achievement award. In addition, two providers are supported by the fostering service to utilise the Life and Social Skill training programme for young people in semi-independent accommodation.

The service has recognised the need for the 5 ECM outcomes to be fully incorporated into the annual foster carers' review so that accurate assessment can be made of how each child/young person makes a positive contribution in their placement and community life.

The fostering service has indicated that among its continued development plans for the service in this are will be: more support to the birth children of foster carers, enable foster carers to facilitate training for other carers, more consultations and feedback from the LAC social workers and the annual reviews, plus development of a pocket handbook for every child in foster care detailing information about what they are entitled to and how they should be cared for.

The service also plans to provide each foster carer with a logbook for each child, which they can take with them when a placement ends.

There was evidence from review notes and discussions with carers to verify that foster carers support the children and young people in their care to cultivate and develop positive behaviour. The inspectors noted that the public behaviour of a young person who was seen at the last inspection has showed remarkable progress. The positive improvements included more confidence and independent development and self-care skills. These have been achieved with good support and guidance from the carer.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

14,29

Quality in this outcome area is **good**

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

Young people leaving care benefit from a consistent and supportive approach from the Leaving Care Team. Foster carers receive good remuneration and incentives

EVIDENCE:

The Leaving Care Team Manager informed the inspectors that regular meetings takes place with the Fostering Team managers and Fostering Service Manager. The leaving care team manager also participates in the accommodation panel meetings and gives feed back information on the care packages.

The foster carers have direct contact with the manager to discuss issues relating to the leaving care package. Young people are provided with training to help prepare them for the transition to independence.

Foster carers are actively involved in the young person's Pathway Planning and are prepared to work with the leaving care team staff to ensure that things go smoothly for the young people in their care.

The inspectors reviewed a pathway plan. It was comprehensive with details of the support needed by the young person. It also referred to the support provided by the foster carer. It identified which independent skills the young person needed and how they were to be met by the young person and their

foster carer. The evidence seen by the inspectors also showed that a responsible adult always attends the young person's PEP and parents evenings. There is also input from the leaving care team during foster carers training plus attendance at foster carer support groups for discussion and information sessions.

There is a user participation group offering additional support to young people. This is held every 8 weeks. The young people used the group as a forum to give their views on plans and how things are going for them. The young people are also supported by Brent Community Friends, which is run by the youth service. The Brent Community Friends take young people out and organised youth groups for them to attend.

The LAC education service, placement and leaving care teams work together to provide a Teenager to Work scheme. Young people aged 16+ are offered a week's work experience in a council department or health agency during the October half term. The aim is to help young people have experience of work environments.

This is in addition to any work experience organised through school. The LAC education service and placements team keep the Leaving Care Team updated on school attendance and support is also provided to young people to achieve their GCSE's.

Work is currently been done to help ensure that young people have a savings account and learn how to budget as part of the independence skills training. Foster carers are responsible for ensuring that young people have a savings account. This has led to fewer LAC leaving care with no savings.

However, the inspection findings indicated some foster carers are not doing this activity. Plans are been considered by the Fostering Service to deduct the saving from source to help ensure the savings is done for each looked after child/young person.

Foster Carers allowances are paid on time and in line with the foster carer agreement. Allowances for foster carers include finances for birthdays, celebrations and festivals as well as a two-week holiday each year. As part of the council's invest to save initiative there are bonuses for foster carers for retention and if they put forward a new foster carer who goes through assessment and are approved.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

1,15,17,19,21,21,24,25,32

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

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

The management and staff in the fostering service have the appropriate experience and knowledge to manage the service.

Good effort continues to be made to support staff and carers and provide them with appropriate learning and development opportunities.

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EVIDENCE:

The fostering service is staffed by people with the appropriate professional knowledge, skills and expertise necessary to help achieve quality and best outcomes for the children, young people, foster carers and staff within the service.

There are clear procedures for monitoring and managing the activities of the service. There were also clear lines of management and staff roles and responsibilities, including the arrangements for staff and carer supervision, support, training and professional development. There is need for improvement in the frequency of unannounced supervisory home visits to foster carers.

The inspectors reviewed several staff supervision records. The staff who spoke to the inspectors confirmed that they received regular supervision, appraisal and support. Supervision agreements were in place on each staff file. The Fostering Service held a team away day, which identified targets for the team and individual staff.

The 2007-2008 staff-training programme was very comprehensive. The training courses to be offered included: the child in need, child protection, working with legal services, induction and professional development. In addition social work staff are able to access post-graduate training.

The management provided the inspectors with satisfactory evidence that verified how quality performance and outcomes are monitored, assessed, evaluated and achieved in line with local and national targets. For example, the number of children's names on the Child Protection Register decreased from 125 at the end of September 2006 to 123 at the end of December 2006. In addition, 55 children were deregistered in the last quarter of 2006, a

significant increase from the previous quarter when 35 Children were de-registered.

The overwhelming responses from foster carers to the inspectors indicated that improvements have and continued to be made in the 'range and quality' of support they received from the fostering service. The information provided by the fostering service, plus observation made by one of the inspectors at a carer's forum and panel meeting; indicated improvements in support and training to carers. It was noted by the inspectors and recognised by the fostering service that take up of training by some foster carers continue to be unsatisfactory.

The management of the fostering service administrative work has been improved greatly with the use of the Frameworki IT system, which is gradually replacing paper records and documents. Among the key features of the system is a Placement File Audit Checklist that enables the social workers and administrative staff to keep records organised and up to date.

The management of the service has acknowledge the need for continued development of the Frameworki IT system to help ensure more effective creation of reports, including complaints, allegations and relevant checks.

The management of the fostering service has recognised the need for continued improvement in the number and range of carers recruited, including family link carers. The service has also recognised the need for continued development of the kinship team and family links services. More effective systems are also needed to monitor statutory checks.

In addition, the service has recognised the need for increase in the number of family group conferences to enable more kinship placements to be made, plus reduce waiting time for assessments to be carried out after the initial visits.

The inspectors were able to see the spreadsheet of all complaints made to or about the children's services, which included the fostering service. The spreadsheet is due to be incorporated into the Framework I system.

Records of complaints are well documented and the majority have been responded to within the borough's timescales. The service has recognised there's need for further improvement in reducing the number of complaints going to stage 2 of the complaint process.

The inspectors met with the supervising social worker for kinship carers and were informed that there has been funding made available to develop a kinship team. The borough recognises the need for children to stay within their own families where possible. The funding will provide for a kinship team manager and a number of social work staff to carry out assessments and supervision of kinship carers.

At the time of this inspection, there were four kinship carers, two of who are for respite care only. The staff member stated that awareness that kinship was a real alternative is not always made clear to social workers in the other teams. A recent staff forum resulted in an increase in referrals. The fostering service has recognised that this issue needs to be addressed through more public education and awareness publicity within the borough.

Kinship carers are not currently included in the preparation for fostering training. The staff member stated that she carries out training for the kinship carers on child protection, managing difficult behaviour and managing contact. A trainer has been appointed to provide kinship training and to integrate this with the main fostering training.

There is Kinship Forum held in London quarterly and attended by social workers from other areas. This has been useful in sharing knowledge about kinship issues and practice.

The inspection findings indicated the need to have more Family Group Conferences to help coincide with children coming into care. This Fostering Service Manager stated this has been identified as a development issue for the near future to coincide with the formation of the new Kinship team.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	4
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	2
30	4

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

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

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

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS15	20,12,22.	The fostering service must ensure that all required CRB and medical checks of foster carers are up to date and renewed on time. Improvement is needed in the timescale relevant checks and updates such as CRB and medicals are carried out.	30/06/07

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS17	The fostering service should continue to ensure that the service is adequately staffed to help clear the backlog of foster carers reviews and the processing of assessments.
2.	FS23	Continued effort needs to be made by the fostering service to help ensure improvement and better take up of the training offered by the foster carers and

		<p>back-up carers.</p> <p>More training should be offered to foster carers to help ensure better and clearer understanding of the ECM 5 Outcomes and how this impact non their work.</p>
3.	FS22	There is need for improvement in the frequency of unannounced supervisory home visits to foster carers.
4.	FS30	There is need for summary explanation from the panel outlining the reasons for its recommendations and approvals.
5.	FS4	Review the complaints procedure to help ensure the number of cases going to level 2 is minimised.
6.	FS11	Closer monitoring, links and liaison is needed between the children social workers and the fostering team workers, to help ensure that planned objectives for the children and young people are shared and closely monitored, for example: pathway plans and reviews.
7.	FS22	<p>Review the procedures and the nature of support given to carers who have allegations made against them, particularly where investigations are ongoing.</p> <p>Increase play therapy and clinical psychology support for carers and LAC.</p>
8.	FS29 FS14	Take necessary action to implement the plan to deduct savings for LAC from source to help minimise the cases where a number of foster carers are not saving for the children and young people in their care.
9.	FS5	Continued development is needed to help ensure the Kinship Team becomes more effective and there is better public education about this area of the fostering service.
10.	FS25	Better effort should be made to streamline the volume and quality of information sent to foster carers, children and young people.

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