



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

Fostering Services

## **London Borough of Hounslow Fostering Service**

Fostering Team

Hounslow Social Services

Civic Centre

Lampton Road, Hounslow

Middlesex

TW3 4DN

8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 30th November  
2004

## Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

### The role of CSCI is to:

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

## Inspection Methods & Findings

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

### The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

**FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION**

**Local Authority Fostering Service?**

YES

**Name of Authority**

London Borough of Hounslow Fostering Service

**Address**

Fostering Team, Hounslow Social Services, Civic Centre,  
Lampton Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW3 4DN

**Local Authority Manager**

Mr Tom O`Neil

**Tel No:**

0208 583 3442

**Address**

Fostering Team, Hounslow Social Services, Civic Centre,  
Lampton Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW3 4DN

**Fax No:**

**Email Address**

---

**Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)**

NO

**Name of Agency**

**Tel No**

**Address**

**Fax No**

**Email Address**

**Registered Number of IFA**

**Name of Registered Provider**

**Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)**

**Date of first registration**

**Date of latest registration certificate**

**Registration Conditions Apply ?**

**Date of last inspection**

25/11/03

<b>Date of Inspection Visit</b>		8th November 2004	<b>ID Code</b>
<b>Time of Inspection Visit</b>		09:30 am	
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>1</b>	Paula Eaton	152891
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Name of Inspector</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)</b> 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.			
<b>Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection</b>		Mr Tom O'Neil (Team 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 London Borough of Hounslow Fostering Service. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

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

The report will show the following:

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

This report is a public document.

## INSPECTION VISITS

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

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

The London Borough of Hounslow's Fostering Service is located in an open plan office in the Civic Centre. The service provides short-term placements, kinship care and respite care. The length of short-term placements varies and could be anything up to four years. The long-term care service is part of the Adoption Team. A Team Manager manages the Fostering Service. He is accountable to a Service Manager. There is an Assistant Team Manager, Placements Manager, Carers Consultation Co-ordinator, Recruitment and Training Co-ordinator, Business Manager, Placements Officer, seven Supervising Social Workers and two Recruitment Social Workers. There are also three Fostering Panel Administration staff and seven Fostering Administration Support staff. The Fostering Service uses some Locum workers and there were vacancies for a Recruitment and Training Assistant and an Education Support Worker.

## **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 London Borough of Hounslow's Fostering Service was inspected over a period of six days. This included time spent at the offices used by the Service, observing a Foster Carer support group and a Foster Panel and interviewing the Team Manager, staff, Foster Carers and Looked After Children.

There are clear lines of accountability within the service and adequate numbers of staff available. Appropriate training is provided and external support is available as required.

Procedures for assessing prospective Carers were satisfactory and the required reviews were being held. Carers generally felt supported by the Fostering Service and the standard of Foster Care provided was high. The staff and Foster Carers strive to ensure the diverse needs of the Looked After Children are met.

The Service has a well constructed and well managed Foster Panel and the members present on the day observed by the Inspector showed a commitment to their role.

Social Workers who responded to the questionnaires distributed by the Commission For Social Care Inspection indicated that they felt the children they had placed were receiving a high standard of care.

The Foster Carer Agreement still does not contain all of the required information under Schedule 5 of the Foster Services Regulations 2002 and the service must ensure that all confidential records are filed appropriately. All aspects of the service provided should be monitored and reviewed and the views of Foster Carers considered.



## Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

### (Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

### The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Section 47 of the Care Standards Act has been repealed and is therefore no longer relevant for the purposes of this inspection report. However, this system has been replaced by new letters based on the Secretary of State being notified about failures to comply with Regulations under section 81(4) of the Health and Social Care Act 2003. In the case of this service two regulatory requirements were not met, one of which is repeated from the previous inspection. These requirements were considered by this Inspector not to be substantial.

## Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

**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	Ms Paula Eaton	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Mr Ged Durkin	Signature	_____
Date	20/01/2005		_____

## 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	28(2)(b) Schedule 5	FS22	The Foster Carer's Agreement must comply fully with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. (Timescale of  <b>This requirement is restated from the previous inspection</b>	1/02/05
2	23(2)(a)	FS25	Children's records must not contain confidential information regarding other Looked After Children.	11/11/04

### 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	FS14	The Fostering Service should develop regular meetings with the Leaving Care Team to improve partnership working.
2	FS16	The problems with the telephone system should be rectified as soon as possible to improve communication systems.
3	FS18	The out of hours system should be monitored and reviewed with foster Carers to ascertain if any improvements to the service can be made.
4	FS23	Strategies should be developed to promote the attendance of male Carers at training.
5	FS24	All information on children should be taken from the carers' home when children move to another placement.

\* 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
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	YES
• 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	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• 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	8/11/04
Time of Inspection	9:30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	34

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?
---------------------------	---------------

The Inspector examined the Statement of Purpose for the service. It had been updated in July 2004 and contained all of the required information. The Team Manager told the Inspector that the updated version had gone to Elected Members to be ratified. Staff and carers spoken to throughout the inspection informed the Inspector that they had been given a copy of the Statement of Purpose.

An appropriate Young Person's Guide to the service has been developed. The Team Manager explained how the guide had been produced in a DVD format to make it more appealing to young people. It contained all of the required information including information on making a complaint and accessing advocacy services.



## 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 Team Manager has a Social Work qualification and has many years experience working with Looked After Children. He also worked as the Assistant Team Manager before being appointed to his current post. The Assistant Team Manager is also suitably qualified and has significant childcare experience.

It was evident throughout the inspection that the service is generally effectively managed and there were clear lines of accountability. The staff spoken to during the inspection said that they felt supported by the management team.

### Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
---------------------------	---------------	---

The Inspector viewed the personnel files of the Team Manager and three other members of staff. All the required recruitment checks had been carried out and the records contained all of the information as required by Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

## 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

It was evident from viewing records and talking to staff and carers that there are very clear guidelines regarding declaring conflicts of interest. There were clear lines of accountability within the service and carers spoken to were clear about the roles of staff within the service.

Appropriate financial policies and procedures are in place and monitored. The Fostering Service is not required to notify the Commission for Social Care Inspection of the events listed below.

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

0

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

2

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

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

The Team Manager has a clear job description, which clearly states his responsibilities and levels of delegation. He is accountable to a Service Manager who is accountable to the Assistant Director of Social Services. The Assistant Team Manager manages the Fostering Service in the absence of the Team Manager.

## 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

The foster homes visited by the Inspector were all safe, comfortably furnished and homely. There was adequate space for the children in all the homes and all of the children had their own bedroom except in one family where the looked after child and the foster carers son had chosen to share because of shared interests. The Team Manager told the Inspector that all foster carers have an unannounced inspection twice a year. This was confirmed by the foster carers spoken to and by the foster carer records viewed. These visits require the Supervising Social Worker to complete a health and safety checklist. There is also information on health and safety issues in the updated Foster Carers Handbook. All the carers spoken to were aware that they might be interviewed by the CSCI.

### 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

During the initial assessment period Foster Carer's are asked for their views on diversity. There are a high number of children requiring foster care who are from ethnic minority groups. The service attempts to recruit suitable foster carers to meet the needs of these children but despite various recruitment strategies there is still a shortage of carers from ethnic minority groups. Carers are offered training in caring for black and ethnic minority children and the foster carers spoken to had been offered advice and guidance regarding the children's cultural backgrounds to ensure they were able to meet the needs of the children placed with them.

It was evident from visiting foster carers and speaking to the children placed with them that the carers encourage the children to develop their sense of identity and learn about their cultural background. For example, one foster carer was in the process of developing memory books for the children placed with her, that included national flags from the Caribbean island that their parents are from and she had also taught the girls how to take care of their skin and hair.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
----------------------------------	----------------------	---

The Fostering Service takes into consideration the Social Work assessments that have been carried out when placing a child. All the carers spoken to told the Inspector that they had received written information before a placement was made and that they had been given advice and support from their 'Link Worker' regarding meeting the needs of the children. Foster Placement Agreements were in place for the four Foster Carers sampled. It was evident from the records viewed that where practical a planned period of introduction had taken place.

**Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)**  
**The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
----------------------------------	----------------------	---

Regular training sessions are provided for Foster Carers in caring for children that have been abused and the service has clear guidelines on safe caring. The Foster Service makes clear the types of punishments that are acceptable. The children spoken to said that they were not punished very often and the types of punishment they described were 'being told off' and not being able to go out for a short time. The Inspector saw written information on the action to be taken of a child is missing and the Foster Carers spoken to were clear about the action they should take.

<b>Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:</b>	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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	3
----------------------------------	----------------------	---

Arrangements for contact are made when a child is placed. The Foster Carers spoken to told the Inspector that their responsibilities regarding contact arrangements were made clear. The Foster Carers were able to describe to the Inspector how they support the children placed with them to maintain contact with their families. The records viewed also confirmed this. Two of the Foster Carers spoken to also described how they monitored the behaviour of children before and after contact and how this was reported to Social Services if there was cause for concern. The Young Persons Guide contained information on how to complain and information regarding advocacy services. The children spoken to were aware of who they could contact if they wanted to complain.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

The Supervising Social Worker and Foster Carers that were interviewed described situations where the views of Looked After Children had been listened to and considered. The children spoken to also told the Inspector that they could talk to their Foster Carers or Social Worker if they had any problems. The records viewed also showed that children are given age appropriate consultation forms to complete before review meetings.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

The Foster Carers spoken to told the Inspector that they had received relevant information on children's healthcare needs before they were placed. The Foster Carers were also able to demonstrate how they meet the health needs of the children. For example, taking them for annual health checks and keeping an updated health record of any appointments or treatment received. The Foster Service also has access to the Looked After Children's Nurse who provides advice to staff and carers on health care issues affecting Looked After children.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

The Fostering Service liaises closely with the Education Coordinator for Looked After Children to ensure that the educational needs of the children using the service are met. Foster Carers confirmed that they attended open evenings at schools. One Carer had made arrangements to discuss progress over the telephone as the carer did not want to draw attention to the young adolescent as it was a trans racial placement. All the children seen had access to study facilities in the Foster Carers home and space to study privately. Foster Carers were actively supporting the children with their education by encouraging attendance and supporting them with their homework.

**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?**

2

The Team Manager told the Inspector that moving on to independent living is first discussed at the first Looked After Children's review meeting held after each child's fifteenth birthday. One of the Looked After Children spoken to told the Inspector that he had started learning how to cook and do his own laundry. He said that he especially enjoyed learning to cook and that the Foster Carer had helped him to learn how to cook Malaysian food. The Service provides training for Foster Carers on preparing young people for independent living. The Futures (Leaving Care) Team, Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers work in partnership to promote the independence skills of the children who are approaching adulthood. The Team Manager told the Inspector that regular meetings with the Futures Team had not yet commenced as recommended at the last inspection.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Human Resources Department for Social Services is responsible for recruiting staff. The Inspector viewed the employment records of four members of staff. All the appropriate information was kept on record and the appropriate checks had taken place.

Regular training is provided for staff and some joint training involving Foster Carers is provided. The members of staff interviewed told the Inspector that they were supported in their professional development and that regular training was provided including external training. The Social Workers spoken to were experienced and knowledgeable about the issues affecting Looked After Children and their carers.

Total number of staff of the agency:

27

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

2

### 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?

2

There is a clear organisational structure for the service and this is outlined in the Statement of Purpose. There are clear lines of accountability and the management team have the appropriate skills and experience. Staff confirmed that they receive monthly supervision and records of these meetings are maintained. Staff and Foster Carers receive regular training updates and a record is maintained to monitor individual progress and training needs. Annual staff appraisals also take place. There is adequate administrative support in the Fostering Service. Since the last inspection the office layout has changed and new equipment had been provided to allow for more flexible working. However, there had been some 'teething' problems and at the time of the inspection there were no direct lines available for individuals to be able to get through to individual Social Workers and all calls were going through the administrative team increasing their workload.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

The Team Manager informed the Inspector that there were adequate numbers of Social Work staff in the Fostering Service. At the time of the inspection there were seven Supervising Social Workers and two Recruitment Social Workers. Locum Workers covered four of these posts. The Social Workers interviewed said that they felt supported by the Management Team and that they were given manageable caseloads.

The Foster Service has a comprehensive recruitment strategy that includes diverse advertising methods the success of which are analysed and monitored. There were adequate procedures in place for recruiting Foster Carers. The assessment process was clear and covered all areas of competency.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>2</b>
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

The Local Authority has sound employment practices in place. The Fostering Service applies national agreed recruitment practices for the Carers. The Fostering Service has its own out of hours service to support Foster Carers that has been in operation since June 2003. It is available until eleven o'clock at night and then the Emergency Duty Team are available. The Foster Carers spoken to gave mixed reviews of this service. Some Carers had found the service useful but others had found it difficult to get through to someone and one Carer said that she had been kept on the phone for a long time and that the call had cost quite a lot because she had to call a mobile telephone number. The Fostering Service should review the use of the service with Foster Carers. All of the Foster Carers spoken to felt supported by their Supervising Social Worker. Carers have annual reviews and health and safety checks take place of their homes.

**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.**

<b>Key Findings and Evidence</b>	<b>Standard met?</b>	<b>3</b>
----------------------------------	----------------------	----------

The Team Manager informed the Inspector that all staff receive induction training within the Fostering Service as well as attending the Corporate Social Services induction training. Internal and external training is available for staff and some joint training between staff and Foster Carers takes place. Training is discussed as part of the staff appraisal system and staff are notified of changes in legislation.



**Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)****All staff are properly accountable and supported.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Staff interviewed confirmed that they have job descriptions. These were also held in the staff records. All staff spoken to were very clear about their role within the service and their responsibilities and receive regular supervision and staff appraisals. The staff spoken to felt supported by the Management Team. Regular team meetings take place.

**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**

There is an annual training programme for Foster Carers. The programme is drawn up following consultation with Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers. Carers confirmed that their Supervising Social Workers and also the Carers Consultation Co-ordinator who offers advice guidance and support on dealing with the issues they encounter in caring for Looked After Children support them. The Foster Carers have annual reviews, the first and third of which, are presented to the Foster Panel. There is also a Carers support group the meets monthly. The Inspector observed the support group as part of the inspection process. It is an opportunity for Carers to meet with other Carers and discuss any issues they are facing, there were also guest speakers at the meeting providing information about forthcoming events for Looked After Children. Respite care is available for 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?****2**

The Foster Carers Agreement does not fully comply with Schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. This requirement is restated from previous inspections. Each Carer has a Supervising Social Worker who visits every four to six weeks. However, the Inspector noted that the records for visits made were not up to date for one of the Carers and this must be addressed. The staff and Carers confirmed that two unannounced visits take place a year. All Carers spoken to confirmed that they had received a copy of the revised Foster Carers Handbook. The Handbook is a comprehensive document that covers all the essential information Carers need.

**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?**

2

Pre-approval training is provided for Foster Carers and existing Foster Carers also take part in this training. Training fits within a framework of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice. When both partners are approved as Carers they are both expected to attend the pre-approval and post-approval training. However, it was evident from talking to Carers and viewing records that some male Carers are reluctant to participate in training. The Fostering Service should look at ways of promoting improved attendance at training courses for both partners if a couple are approved for fostering. Training is provided at convenient times for Carers. Training is discussed with the Supervising Social Worker during visits and at annual reviews. Training and advice on safe caring is provided and there is a support group for the sons and daughters of Foster Carers. The Carers children are also involved in the assessment process for new Carers.

## 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?

2

The Fostering Service has a policy on recording information on the Looked After Children. Foster Carers are expected to keep records on the children and to record information on at least a weekly basis. The Foster Carers visited kept adequate records and all Carers had a lockable space to store these records. One Carer still had a memory book of one child that had moved on, she had made attempts to get it passed on to the child but had been unsuccessful. All the Carers spoken to had started memory books for the children placed with them. The Foster Carers were aware of what information needed to be recorded and passed on.

### 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?

2

The Inspector examined a selection of administrative records including the records of staff, Carers, children, complaints and allegations. The records of staff and Carers were well maintained. The records of children were generally well maintained, however, the Inspector found two instances where information regarding one child was recorded in another child's file. The Team Manager told the Inspector that case files are regularly audited. The complaints and allegations records were both satisfactory and adequate recording systems were in place. Appropriate procedures were in place for Children and Foster Carers to access their records.

**Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:**

112

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

136

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

X

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

16

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

8

**Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £**

252.62

**Maximum £**

316.98

## 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 Fostering Service is located in Hounslow Civic Centre. It is an open plan office. Changes to the office layout had been made since the last inspection and the Team Manager told the Inspector that additional IT equipment was being provided. There are adequate systems in place for storing records and additional meeting room space is now available. The premises are adequately insured.

## 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?

9

This Standard is not applicable as the Fostering Service is a Local Authority Service.

### Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The finances of the Fostering Service operate within the Local Authority's budgetary system. The service receives an annual budget. The Service Manager, Team Manager and Business Manager meet regularly to monitor the budget and the service's expenditure.

### Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

#### Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a written policy on fostering allowances, which includes a breakdown of the allowances for specific items and expenditure such as pocket money. One allowance is paid to cover all expenditure. Extra payments are paid to Carers in exceptional circumstances such as when a child is very destructive. All the Carers spoken to told the Inspector that they receive their payments promptly and that the allowances were adequate. Savings accounts had been opened for the children placed and Carers were saving money for the children on a regular basis.

## 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

The Fostering Service has a Handbook for the members of the Fostering Panel. The Inspector observed the Fostering Panel. The Chair of the panel is an independent person with senior management experience. She has relevant previous childcare experience and qualifications. All members of the panel have Criminal Records Bureau checks and cannot vote at the meeting until these are cleared.

The Panel receives and considers the first and third annual reviews of Carers and also any changes to the conditions of approval. On the day the Inspector observed the Panel annual reviews were presented and several new Foster Carer assessments were presented for approval. Carers are invited to attend and several did so on the day observed. The Panel had a member with expertise in education and one with expertise in child health. The Panel had read and considered the written information sent to them on the cases to be considered and dealt with each case in a sensitive manner that prioritised the needs of the Looked After Children.

The Panel provides a quality assurance function for the service. One particular case discussed raised issues regarding the assessment process for one couple and this was fed back to the Team.

## Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

### Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
---------------------------	---------------

	3
--	---

The Fostering Service has a pool of respite carers. They are used when birth parents need a break lasting a few days or weeks to prevent family breakdown. The parents remain in control of the health and educational needs of the children placed with respite carers. Foster Carers also use respite care when they need a break from caring for children who present severe problems. This is done to prevent breakdowns of the placements. Placement Agreements are drawn up when respite care is provided. The respite carers are trained and approved in the same way as other Carers.

## 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?
---------------------------	---------------

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
---------------------------	---------------

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
---------------------------	---------------

The Fostering Service encourages children to be placed with family members or friends if this is appropriate. When this occurs the Kinship Carers are assessed in a similar way to other Carers and are presented at the Foster Panel for approval. The Kinship Carers are identified by the child's Social Worker when it is recognised that the children need to be looked after. Kinship Carers are allocated a Supervising Social Worker and offered the same training and support as other Carers.	
---	--



**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

We are working on the best way to include provider responses in published reports. In the meantime, responses received are available on request.

**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

YES

Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

NO

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

YES

**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

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

N/A

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 Jacqueline Georghiou of London Borough of Hounslow 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.**

<b>Print Name</b>	<u>Jacqueline Georghiou</u>
<b>Signature</b>	<u>Jacqueline Georghiou (Signed)</u>
<b>Designation</b>	<u>Service Manager, Placements &amp; Futures</u>
<b>Date</b>	<u>19/01/05</u>

**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:**

<b>Print Name</b>	_____
<b>Signature</b>	_____
<b>Designation</b>	_____
<b>Date</b>	_____

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**  
33 Greycoat Street  
London  
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000  
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120  
[www.csci.org.uk](http://www.csci.org.uk)

S0000042829.V188419.R01

© This report may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection



The paper used in this document is supplied from a sustainable source