



Champions for
Social Care
Improvement

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough Bromley Fostering

Bromley Social Services Civic Centre

Stockwell Close

Bromley

Kent

BR1 3UH

8th March 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 Bromley Fostering

Address

Bromley Social Services Civic Centre, Stockwell Close,
Bromley, Kent, BR1 3UH

Local Authority Manager

Gill Barnard

Tel No:

020 8464 3333

Address

Bromley Social Services Civic Centre, Stockwell Close,
Bromley, Kent, BR1 3UH

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

NO

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

21st Jan
2003

Date of Inspection Visit		8th March 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:30 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Cheryl Carter	135535
Name of Inspector	2	Sue Grindlay	136395
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)		N/A	
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection			

Introduction to Report and Inspection

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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)

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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

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

Part D: Provider's Response

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D.2. Action Plan

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 NCSC in respect of London Borough Bromley Fostering. 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 NCSC 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.

Bromley Fostering is a Local Authority fostering service. It manages all the Authority's in house fostering functions. The fostering department has responsibility for emergency placements, long-term foster care. At the time of the inspection the Authority had 134 approved foster carers with 179 children in foster care of these 99 were with Bromley's 'in house' carers, 29 were with kinship carers and 51 were with Independent Fostering Agencies. The fostering budget also funds 8 Residence Orders.

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 fostering service is fairly well managed and the social workers in this department are committed to raising the standard of fostering and take on many additional roles in order that the service continue to run smoothly. Bromley has embarked on a rolling programme of recruiting foster carers and has attracted a number of carers of African/Caribbean descent. This should lessen the need for trans-racial placements.

There is a rolling recruitment programme of carers throughout the year. The selection process is rigorous and the panel is quite thorough at reading and requesting further work to be done if they think it's necessary before making any decisions to approve a carer.

Staffing levels in the team have improved since the last inspection. There was only one agency staff member and that member of staff has just been appointed as a permanent staff member. Supervision for the staff is irregular and inconsistent. Staff identify their own training needs and set about finding the courses themselves and these are then approved by the manager. The manager along with her team works very long hours that suggest that the team is understaffed. Despite increases in administrative support staff remain concerned at the number of hours spent doing administrative tasks.

The Statement of Purpose is in place and has been updated since last year. However Bromley's guide for children in foster care has not been completed and this remains outstanding. 7 out of 22 foster Carers who returned the questionnaire said they did not get sufficient information about the children while 14 foster carers said that they did not feel there were sufficient social workers in the fostering team. The inspector observed children's files where the information was either missing altogether or they were incomplete or unsigned. One carer commented that the social workers showed the highest levels of professionalism.

Monthly supervision to carers is regular and consistent. There were records of supervision on the carers' files. This included the same level of supervision for kinship carers. There are a number of courses available to carers. A number of carers have completed their Level 3 NVQ. There is an information evening in April for the new Level 3 NVQ and a number of foster carers have expressed an interest in doing the course this year.

It was difficult to quantify the social worker's questionnaires as these were filled in different handwriting. Twenty two social workers responded to the questionnaire and all said that they had seen the Statement of Purpose and last year's inspection report, but the social workers interviewed said they had not seen it. The inspectors decided to disregard the Social worker questionnaires, as their presentation was not consistent.

The inspectors were pleased that Bromley has now got some initiatives in place that addresses the health and education of children 'Looked After'. This is a good start but the Borough has some way to go to catch up with the initiatives of neighbouring boroughs. The service to kinship carers is good as these carers are subject to the same assessments social and financial support as the in-house carers.

At the time of the inspection the reception area for the fostering department was being redesigned and undergoing refurbishment. The reception area may look better, however steps must be taken to ensure that the person meeting service users and visitors to the fostering department knows how to represent the Borough in a positive way. Overall this inspection has shown that there were a number of improvements to last year's inspection.

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:

YES

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

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	
1	20	15	Staff checks, records and information must comply to Schedule 1 of these regulations	
2	19	16	The fostering service must have sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced staff given the size of the service. This includes administrative staff support for social workers	
3	21	20	The Fostering provider must ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisals	

Action is being taken by the National Care Standards Commission 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 _____
Second Inspector _____
Locality Manager _____
Date _____

Signature _____
Signature _____
Signature _____

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 and recommendations 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	20	3	Staff checks, records and information must comply to Schedule 1 of these regulations	01/05/04
2	20	15	Staff checks, records and information must comply to Schedule 1 of these regulations	01/05/04
3	19	16	The fostering service must have sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced staff given the size of the service. This includes administrative staff	01/05/04
4	21	20	The Fostering provider must ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisals	01/05/04

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	1	The Authority must have in place clear guidelines to ensure that all Social Workers and placing social workers are familiar with the Fostering Statement of Purpose and its Aims and Objectives
2	4	There is a definite conflict in roles and the Service Manager must liaise with her counterparts in the LAC team to address this issue.
3	11	The inspector recommends that a record of all concerns and complaints be maintained and held in the fostering department and outcomes recorded.
4	21	Placement meetings should also set out frequency of contact by the children's social worker according to need, this can be reviewed at the children's review to be increased or decreased as appropriate.
5	24	The Fostering Service must liaise with the placing social worker to ensure that the relevant people sign all relevant documents and copies placed on file within one week of a child being placed.

* 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	5
Survey of placing authorities	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	NO
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
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	8/3/04
Time of Inspection	09.30
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	53

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The Statement of Purpose was revised. This does meet the requirements but not all foster carers or placing social workers were in receipt of the Statement of Purpose. It was difficult to say how many Social Workers had seen 'The Statement of Purpose' as this part of the questionnaire on all the questionnaires that was returned had been filled in a different handwriting. Of the Social workers interviewed at least two had not read the document and stated that the question was already filled when they received the document. Bromley's 'Children's Guide to Fostering is still in the process of revision and will be completed by the end of April. The Authority must have in place clear guidelines to ensure that all Social Workers and placing social workers are familiar with the Fostering Statement of Purpose (Recommendation 1)

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
<p>The fostering manager has the relevant qualification and a range of experience in childcare. The team is fairly well managed and the Manager is currently undertaking the Level 5 NVQ Diploma.</p>		

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?	1
<p>The staff records for the manager were inspected. There is evidence that the manager has been appraised but the Inspector could find no proof of identity on file, there is no CRB check or evidence that this has been applied for. Proof of relevant qualifications were also difficult to access. This does not conform to regulations. The manager must not have any unsupervised contact with children until a clear CRB check is returned to the department. (Requirement 1 Reg. 20)</p>		

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?

2

The roles of the Fostering Link Workers are set out and seem clear, however the role appears to be blurred on occasions as there are times when the child is without a social worker and carers are unable to contact the placing social worker, where there is a definite conflict in roles the Service Manager should liaise with his counterparts in the LAC team to address this issue. (Recommendation 2)

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

1

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The written policies and procedures, discussions with the staff team and from my interview with the manager the inspectors concluded that the service is fairly well managed. There is now a Deputy Manager in post who deputises in the absence of the 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
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The homes visited as part of this inspection were homely and free from hazards. Health and Safety assessments of the carer's homes form part of the assessments undertaken prior to Foster Carers approval.

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
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From our discussions with staff members and observations at the Foster Carers group the inspectors were informed that there is a shortage of black foster carers in the Borough. This has resulted in a number of children being placed with white carers. One foster carer with a trans racial placement said that she has had support with meeting the needs of this child. The manger informed me that their latest recruitment campaign has attracted quite a number of African/Caribbean foster carers and some of these are currently being assessed.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)		
Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The matching of children with carers is done by the Link Workers. The Inspectors observed a staff meeting where a number of children were presented to the team for matching to carers. The discussions around each child were detailed and observations around needs and welfare carefully considered before decisions were taken.		

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)		
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
There is a range of training available to foster carers. The foster carers, members of their families and regular visitors to the home all have enhanced CRB checks carried out. There were three CP investigations in the past year. The Quality Assurance and Child Protection Manager has responsibility for Child Protection. One foster carer felt that she would have benefited from Child Protection training before the child was placed with her.		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	100	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)		
The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
The placement agreement sets out the contact arrangements between the child and their family. However these are not always given to the carers on time and some carers feel that their views on contact were not always included in decisions about the children. One carer reported that a violent father was given her address by the social worker and then was left to manage the situation by herself.		

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)
The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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There were only 3 responses to the children's questionnaire. All three who returned their questionnaire and those spoken to say that they were involved in key issues that affect their lives. Children are also able to contribute to their reviews and are aware of how to make a complaint. It was difficult to track complaints as there is no central record of complaints. Child Protection allegations are recorded, however other complaints such as care practices and dissatisfaction with social workers and other complaints are not recorded. The inspector recommends that a record of all concerns and complaints be maintained and held in the fostering department and outcomes recorded. This is essential for the Commission to validate that this standard is met. (Recommendation 3)

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)
The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Bromley has appointed a 'Looked After' children's nurse whose responsibilities include making sure that all children 'Looked After' have health care plans. The LAC nurse is able to monitor medicals through LAC reviews. The LAC Nurse also collects information on past medical history where possible. Children will normally attend their medicals, however in the case of older children who refuse to attend medicals the Nurse will see the child at the foster placement and do a health assessment. There is also a project for 'Looked After' teenagers where there is a clinic three times a week and health assessments are also carried out there.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)
The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Bromley has an education service for 'Looked After' children that includes an Education Co-ordinator, a part time Educational Psychologist a full time Education Social Worker and an Administrator. The coordinator collects information on all 'Looked After' children and is involved in making sure that all children have a Personal Education Plans. This department supports vulnerable children and works with schools in and out of Bromley providing support to prevent permanent exclusions from schools.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The foster carers in conjunction with their Link worker work closely to provide, support and help the young person prepare for adult living. Pathway planning is done with the placing social worker. The Leaving Care Team works with the young person to help with the transition from foster care to Supported Lodgings, the first step before independence. One foster carer expressed concerns about the cut off point at sixteen where children may be moved from foster care to supported lodgings. The inspectors were assured that this is extremely rare and young people can receive assistance with their needs up to the age of twenty-one years.

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?

1

The fostering team is motivated and committed to providing a service to the children that are placed in their care. The staff does this with limited resources. The staff are undertaking a number of roles in addition to their fostering link worker role. The staff files were inspected in the personnel department, the information needed was difficult to access. The inspectors found files that did not have the relevant information including proof of identity, proof of qualifications and no evidence of CRB checks and one file contained letters relating to different people. The personnel officer removed these when they were pointed out. The personnel officer informed the inspectors that Bromley is currently making sure that every staff member has an enhanced CRB check on file. This is a major shortfall and one that was highlighted at the last inspection. Staff without enhanced CRB checks should not have unsupervised contact with children. (Requirement 2 Reg. 20)

Total number of staff of the agency:

X

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?

1

The staff have continued to express concerns about their workloads and the amount of administrative tasks that they undertake. Staff supervision is not meeting the statutory requirements however the inspectors were informed that the manager has an open door policy. We also understand that the staff complement have been increased by two further full time social work posts and two part time administrative posts which have been added to alleviate this problem. The manager must ensure that every effort is made to meet the requirements for staff supervision. (Requirement 3 Reg. 19)

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)		
The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Since the last inspection there have been six new team members. At least two had worked in other departments of Bromley Social Services. There is hope that this will bring some stability to the team. There are 9 social workers, an administrator, and the manager. Foster carers have said that there is more stability with their link workers but expressed concerns about the support from the placing social worker and in some cases children are placed without an allocated social worker. Bromley should now have a policy in place to address this issue and good practice dictates that all children in care should have an allocated social worker. The inspectors felt that the administrative support for the team was inadequate.		

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)		
The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The foster carers are able to access an out of hour's telephone service during the weekends and bank holidays including Christmas and New year. The manager has to rely on the good will of the staff to offer this service, as this is not written into their job descriptions. At all other times foster carers will access emergency support via Bromley Emergency Duty Team. The manager hopes to expand this service to cover weekdays. Carers interviewed said that they have copies of their supervision notes.		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The fostering section-training budget has not changed since the last inspection it remains at £500.00 for specialist courses. Social Workers in the fostering department also have access to the children and families budget for their training needs. A number of foster carers are about to start the level 3 NVQ a number of foster carers have already completed this course. Some of the link workers have benefited from further training. There is one social worker involved with the training for carers, and the trainee social worker has attended two Saturday training sessions for carers. The trainee will do an evaluation of the training at the end of her placement.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	1
<p>Staff supervision is irregular, although staff reports that the manager has an open door policy whereby issues are dealt with. The inspectors are concerned that unless there are some clear structures in place and the responsibility for supervising staff is shared it is always likely to be difficult to meet the three weekly requirements for supervision. (Requirement 4 Reg. 21)</p>		

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?	2
<p>From the feedback from carers the carers stated that they feel supported and improvements in this area continue. Link workers continue to give a good service to their carers, they also have to support children where there is no placing social worker, and this raises issues of case management. Bromley should have a policy on case allocation whenever a child is 'Looked After'. Placement meetings should also set out frequency of contact by the children's social worker according to need, this can be reviewed at the children's review to be increased or decreased as appropriate. (Recommendation 4)</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)		
The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Foster carers are visited regularly and there was evidence on file that indicates that foster carers are having regular monthly supervision from their link workers.</p>		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Bromley has a training programme available for carers. A number of carers have already completed their level 3 NVQ. A new course is scheduled to commence in the new financial year and a number of carers have already been identified for this course. There are a number of other courses available and many carers take the opportunity to take advantage of these courses. One carer felt that she would have benefited from a children protection course prior to children being placed with her.

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?

1

At least two children's files inspected were incomplete and there were no consent to medicals or agreement to accommodation. Care plans were not signed by key people. Carers are encouraged to keep records of the placement, for monitoring and for the child's record of his/her time in the placement. The fostering manager in line with the LAC team manager must ensure that all relevant forms have been filled in, signed and placed on the appropriate files within one week of the child being placed. (Recommendation 5)

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?

3

Foster Carer files had all the relevant details and were well organised. It would be helpful to see copies of the LAC forms for the children currently being cared for by that carer on the carers files.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

99

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

194

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

66

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

19

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

5

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

307.86

Maximum £

459.62

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?

2

The Fostering offices have been refurbished. Additional desks and computer terminals have been installed. The staff now has 1 terminal between two staff. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is no disabled access to the building for staff and no lifts to the upper floors.

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
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Funding for the service is provided by Bromley Social Services. This standard was not assessed on this occasion.

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?	9
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This standard was not assessed on this occasion.

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

Foster Carers were pleased with how their payments are made and no complaints were received.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Membership of the panel covers an appropriate range of knowledge and experience. The panel appeared to be well managed and the panel observed by the inspector had a number of cases to consider, the panel asked pertinent questions.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Policies and procedures exist for short term breaks. More carers are now taking advantage of this service.	3
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Bromley recognises the importance of carers who are family or friends of the child. They are fully assessed and have the same rights and entitlements as 'in house' carers in terms of financial support, supervision and training.

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

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

Comments were received from the provider

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

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

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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

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

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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