



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Fostering Services (LBHF)

Barclay House

2nd Floor, Effie Road

Fulham

London

SW6 1EN

2nd February 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

Address

2nd Floor, Barclay House, Effie Road, Fulham, London, SW6

Local Authority Manager

Mr Steve Miley

Tel No:

020 8753 2300

Address

Barclay House, 2nd Floor, Effie Road, Fulham, London, SW6

Fax No:

020 8753 2329

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

09/03/04

Date of Inspection Visit		2 nd February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00	
Name of Inspector	1	Tony Lawrence	077368
Name of Inspector	2	Jackie Derbyshire	
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Steve Miley – Fostering Service Manager Biri Yaya – 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 Fostering Services (LBHF). 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 Hammersmith and Fulham Fostering Service provides placements for 190 children and young people with approved carers. The Service provides full-time, short term and respite placements with approximately 195 carers. The Service operates four teams of social workers, each with its own Team Manager. One team deals with the recruitment and approval of foster carers; two teams support foster carers after approval by the Council's Fostering Panel and there is also an Access to Resources Team. All placements are approved by the Council to ensure children and young people placed are safe and well cared for. The service is based in Social Services offices, shared with the Council's Looked After Children teams and other services for children and young people. The office provides secure accommodation for confidential information.

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.)

This announced inspection took place over two days, with additional visits to meet young people, foster carers and the Chair of the Foster Panel. The Inspectors met with social workers and managers working in the service and tracked the care received by a number of children and young people. Confidential questionnaires were sent to 124 selected young people and 15 foster carers and their comments are included in this report. The Key Standards for fostering services were assessed and covered in this report. The service is well managed and a team of experienced and qualified workers has been recruited. At the end of this inspection the Inspectors felt that looked after children and young people are cared for safely and foster carers are well supported. The local authority has implemented seven of the eight requirements made at the last inspection. One requirement is repeated in this report.

Statement of Purpose

This Standard was met.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose that details the services provided by the Fostering Service. Staff working in the service are aware of the Statement.

Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service

Of these 2 Standards, 1 was met and 1 was not assessed.

All permanent staff working in the service are employed through external advertising and references are taken up and checked by Managers. All staff who have contact with children and young people have a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau.

Management of the fostering service

Of these 2 Standards, 1 was met and 1 was not assessed.

There is a clear management structure within the Fostering Service and the Social Services Department. Management arrangements and lines of accountability are well known to staff. Managers in the Service ensure that the Commission is informed of significant incidents and issues. There is a need to ensure that supervisory visits to carers take place and are recorded.

Securing and promoting welfare

Of these 9 Standards, 5 were met, 2 were not met, 1 was exceeded and 1 was not assessed.

Inspectors felt that foster placements offered a very good standard of accommodation. Young people also said they were happy with the accommodation provided. Carers said they were usually given sufficient information at the start of each placement and they felt well supported by the Service. The Department must ensure that the Fostering Services Regulations are followed when placing children/young people in an emergency to ensure individuals are cared for safely. The Council has produced a DVD of young people talking about their experiences of the care system. All staff and approved foster carers have seen this DVD. Inspectors felt the health and education needs of child/young people were met appropriately.

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

Of these 9 Standards, 2 were met, 2 were not met, 1 was exceeded and 4 were not assessed.

The Family Placement Unit employs 8 Managers, 33 social workers and 6 support staff. All Managers and social workers have a professional qualification and all staff who have contact with children/young people have a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. Staff in the Fostering Service have been working to develop an out of hours support system for foster carers. This will provide a telephone support service that will be staffed by a manager or social worker from the Service. The Department has also established the post of Training and Carer Development Consultant to improve the training and development opportunities for approved foster carers.

Records

Of these 2 Standards, 1 was not met and 1 was not assessed.

The Fostering Service maintains all the records required to meet this standard. There is a need to ensure that all required information is kept on foster carers' files and the standard of report writing in some files kept by the Looked After Children's Teams should be improved.

Fitness of premises

This Standard was met.

The Fostering Services offices provide a good standard of accommodation and there is additional space available in the building for interviews, training etc. The offices are secure and accessible and are located close to transport links.

Financial requirements

Of these 3 Standards, 1 was met and two did not apply.

Carers confirmed that fees and allowances are paid promptly. All carers receive a weekly fee and an additional allowance, based on the age of the child/young person placed with them. A higher fee is paid to carers who have successfully completed their NVQ training.

Fostering Panels

This Standard was exceeded.

The Council has separate Panels for the approval and review of foster carers. The membership of the statutory Panel meets the requirements and there is an independent Chair. The Director of the Children's Trust signs formal letters informing carers of the Panel's decision.

Short-term breaks

This Standard was met.

There are a small number of respite foster carers who provide short breaks and a Shared Care scheme that provides short breaks for children with disabilities. The PACT scheme recruits carers to work with young people before they come into the care system.

Family and Friend Carers

This Standard was not met.

There is a need for the Department to ensure that agreed procedures are followed when placing children/young people in an emergency, to ensure the person safety.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

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	17	FS4	Supervisory visits must take place and copies of report must be available for tracking and monitoring.	01/05/04

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 Regulatory Inspector	Tony Lawrence	Signature
Date	_____	_____
Second Inspector	Jackie Derbyshire	Signature
Date	_____	_____
Regulation Manager		Signature
Date	_____	_____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	17	FS4	Supervisory visits must take place and copies of reports must be available for tracking and monitoring. This is a repeat requirement.	30/06/05
2	38	FS9	The Social Services Department must ensure that the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are followed when placing children/young people in an emergency to ensure individuals are cared for safely.	30/06/05
3	16	FS13	The Department must ensure that a Personal Education Plan is completed and regularly updated for each looked after child/young person.	30/06/05
4	21	FS18	The Council's health and safety policy should be reviewed to ensure that staff working out of office hours are supported appropriately.	30/06/05
5	30	FS24	The Department should ensure that basic standards of literacy are met in all official reports.	30/06/05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action

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	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NA
• Directors of Social services	NA
• Child protection officer	NA
• Specialist advisor (s)	NA
• 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	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	NO
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	2/2/05
Time of Inspection	10:00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	25

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?

3

The Local Authority has provided the Commission with an updated copy of the Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose. This clearly details the facilities and services provided by the service. The Service Manager confirmed that the Statement is made available to all members of staff working in the service. In discussion with social workers employed in the service, the Inspectors were satisfied that all were aware of the Statement.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
This Standard was not assessed.		

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 Service Manager confirmed that all permanent staff working in the service are employed through external advertising. Applicants are short-listed by two Team Managers, using agreed criteria. The Team Manager responsible for recruitment to the vacant post must phone both referees to verify the reference. One reference must be from a current employer. The Service Manager also confirmed that all staff who have contact with children and young people have a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. Team Managers are responsible for checking CRB Disclosures for agency social workers recruited to cover vacant posts.		

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

There is a clear management structure within the Fostering Service and the Social Services Department. Management arrangements and lines of accountability are well known to staff working in the service. The Service is covered by the local authority's financial procedures and these are reviewed regularly. Managers in the Service ensure that the Commission is informed of significant incidents and issues. During the inspection, the Inspectors reviewed the fostering services files for a number of approved foster carers. The files were generally well organised and up to date, but there is a need to ensure that supervisory visits to carers take place and copies of reports must be available for tracking and monitoring (see Standard 21). **This is a repeat requirement.**

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

3

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.

7

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

11

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

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard was not assessed.

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

An Inspector visited three foster carers as part of this inspection. The carers were selected at random from the Service's list of approved carers. All three placements offered a very good standard of accommodation. All young people had their own bed and bedrooms were always shared by children of the same gender, unless they were siblings. Carers' files included copies of health and safety assessment checklists, completed as part of the approval process. Carers confirmed that they are given guidance on health and safety issues. During visits to foster carers, young people also told the Inspector that they were happy with the standard of accommodation provided. Seven young people returned confidential questionnaires and four commented that they were happy with the accommodation provided.

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

Previous inspection reports have highlighted the shortage of white foster carers. The Recruitment and Assessment Team Manager told the Inspectors that recent recruitment activity had included targeted recruitment of White British carers. The Team Manager said that this had been successful and an increased number of white carers would hopefully be available, following assessments and approval by the Fostering Panel. Social Workers in the supervising teams told the Inspectors that children from other ethnic groups are usually placed with carers from the same culture. Young people returning questionnaires said that carers supported them with their religion and culture.

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

Carers told the Inspector that they were usually given sufficient information about each child / young person at the start of the placement. They also said that they felt well supported by the Service, if problems arose. The Fostering Service Manager and social workers confirmed that culturally appropriate placements could often be made, but the Service has a shortage of white carers. The Inspectors were told that the Recruitment Team has addressed this issue with targeted advertising and it is hoped that more white carers will be approved in the future. Social workers told the Inspectors that children were usually matched with carers who could meet their needs, although there is a need for more carers for children with a disability.

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?**

1

During this visit, the Inspectors were concerned about the placement of one young person with a carer who had not been approved by the Fostering Service. The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 allow a local authority to place a child/young person with a relative or friend in an emergency, but certain steps must be taken to ensure that the child/young person is looked after appropriately and safely. In this case, it appeared that these safeguards were not in place until the young person had been placed for more than two months. It was also not possible for Inspectors to establish whether the young person had been visited weekly, a requirement of Regulation 30. The Commission has raised this case with the Social Services Department and managers have been asked to clarify why procedures may not have been followed. The Department must ensure that the Regulations are followed when placing children/young people in an emergency to ensure individuals are cared for safely. Seven young people returned confidential questionnaires and all said they had never experienced physical restraint in a foster home. Five young people also commented that any sanctions were fair and appropriate.

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?**

3

The foster carers' case files reviewed by the Inspectors all contained information about the child/young person's family, friends and other significant people. Contact arrangements were detailed in the Placement Agreement. Records of supervisory visits by social workers included information about contact visits.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

Managers and social workers told the Inspectors about efforts that have been made within the Department to consult with looked after children / young people. Specific training has been set up for the children of foster carers to help them understand and discuss issues that may arise during placements. Supervising social workers also told the Inspectors that they monitored each placement to ensure that foster children/young people are treated the same as the carer's birth children. The Council does not have set rates of pocket money for looked after children. The amount of pocket money is agreed individually at the placement agreement meeting. The Council has produced a DVD of young people talking about their experiences of the care system. This DVD has been seen by all staff working in the Fostering Service and all approved foster carers. The Inspectors were told that this had resulted in meaningful, practical changes for children/young people placed in foster care. One example was that a letter has been sent to all carers reminding them that suitcases/appropriate bags must be used when children/young people move on from the placement. The Inspectors felt this was an excellent example of best practice. Young people who returned confidential questionnaires also provided examples of things that had changed as a result of their comments. These included the way food was cooked, bedroom furniture, increased contact with relatives and the amount of pocket money provided.

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

The Fostering Service Manager told the Inspectors that the Department has good links with local primary health care services. All looked after children are offered a statutory medical with a consultant paediatrician. There is also a dedicated nurse for looked after children who will offer health advice to children and young people. Social workers in the Fostering Service told the Inspectors that this was an excellent service. Staff also spoke positively about the sexual health worker employed to work with looked after young people. Foster carers are expected to register all children placed with them with a local GP or ensure that their registration can continue with their own GP. Supervising social workers told the Inspectors that this is checked at placement agreement meetings and during supervision visits. In confidential questionnaires, young people said that their carers supported them with health issues, including diet, registering with a GP and attending medical appointments.

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?	2
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The Service Manager confirmed that the educational needs of children/young people placed with foster carers were monitored by the supervising social workers employed in the Service. Inspection of social workers' supervision visit reports showed that each young person's involvement in education is reviewed at each visit. Where young people have been excluded from mainstream schooling, arrangements are made to provide other opportunities and these are also monitored by the supervising social workers. Social Workers also told the Inspectors that the Education Worker for Looked After Children provided valuable support to young people and the Fostering Service. During this inspection, the case files of seven looked after children/young people were reviewed. Not all files contained a copy of the child/young person's Personal Education Plan (PEP). The Department must ensure that a PEP is completed and regularly updated for each looked after child/young person.

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
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This Standard was not assessed.

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 Fostering Service Manager confirmed that the Council's Family Placement Unit employs 8 Managers, 33 social workers and 6 support staff. All Managers and social workers have a professional qualification and all staff who have contact with children/young people have a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Managers confirmed that CRB Disclosures are obtained and checked for all agency staff working in the Service. Social workers told the Inspectors that the Service was generally well staffed, although they had experienced some difficulties retaining permanent support staff.

Total number of staff of the agency:

47

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

0

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard was not assessed.

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

As part of this inspection, the Inspectors met staff and managers from the Fostering Service and visited three foster carers. The Inspectors felt that the Service was staffed appropriately to provide the services detailed in the Statement of Purpose. All social workers and managers in the service have a professional qualification. A range of carers has been recruited to provide short breaks, emergency and longer-term placements, including placements with relatives and friends. NVQ training is provided for carers and a new training post has been established to provide more training and development opportunities for carers.

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?	2
To assess this Standard, the Inspectors met with social workers, managers and other staff employed in the service. The Service has recruited a team of qualified and experienced staff and all said they had worked in other areas of child care social work before joining the Fostering Service. Staff and managers said there were few problems with recruiting and retaining staff and no permanent members of staff have left the Service since the last inspection. Social Workers were aware of the Service's Statement of Purpose, policies and procedures. The Inspectors felt there was a need to develop the Council's health and safety policy to ensure that staff working out of office hours are supported appropriately.		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
This Standard was not assessed.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
This Standard was not assessed.		

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
During the inspection, the Inspectors reviewed the fostering service's files for 5 approved foster carers. The files were well organised and information was easily located. The Service has a standardised format to enable social workers to record their monthly supervision visits to carers. There is also a form to record unannounced supervisory visits. Staff working in the service were aware of the need for and importance of, unannounced visits and told the Inspectors that these were carried out at least once a year to each carer. The Service Manager told Inspectors that the Fostering Panel reviews the number of supervisory visits made to each carer at their annual review. The date of the unannounced visits is also recorded at the review. Not all visit reports were seen on the files checked by the Inspectors and only one unannounced visit report was seen. There is a need to ensure that supervisory visits to carers take place and copies of reports must be available for tracking and monitoring. This is a repeat requirement.		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

0

This Standard was not assessed.

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?**

4

Since the last inspection, staff in the Fostering Service have been working to develop an out of hours support system for foster carers. This will provide a telephone support service that will be staffed by a manager or social worker from the Service. While it will initially run only at weekends, the plan is to extend the service to weekday evenings in the future. The Service Manager confirmed that all approved carers have access to training courses run by the Social Services Department. Since the last inspection the Department has also established the post of Training and Carer Development Consultant to improve the training and development opportunities for approved foster carers. During this visit, an Inspector spoke with the Consultant. He confirmed that he would be running induction training for new carers, based on the National Minimum Standards and core skills. The Consultant will deliver some training and also commission training from other providers. The system of Foster Carer Support Groups has also been reorganised since the last inspection. There are now seven separate groups, organised according to the ages of the young people placed with the carer. The Carer Development Consultant will also provide support to these groups, arranging speakers for specific topics. There are also plans to produce a quarterly magazine for 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

During this visit the Inspectors reviewed the case files of 7 young people looked after by the Local Authority and placed with approved foster carers. These files are maintained by the child's social worker working in the Council's Looked After Children (LAC) social work teams. The LAC teams are based in the same building as the fostering service. All seven files were well organised and all contained updated LAC information and documentation. Each file included details of the social worker's contact with the young person. The Inspectors felt that the quality of some reports in individual files was not up to an acceptable standard. Some hand-written notes were difficult to read and some reports contained numerous grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. The Department should ensure that basic standards of literacy are met in all official reports.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

0

This Standard was not assessed.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

190

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

201

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

219

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

7

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

11

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

180.18

Maximum £

200.18

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 based in Council offices close to Fulham Broadway. The offices are accessible to people with restricted mobility. Security staff monitor access to the building during the working day. The building provides accommodation for a range of services for children and families in the Borough. The Fostering Service offices are on one floor. The Inspectors felt the offices provide a good standard of accommodation and there is additional space available in the building for interviews, training etc. The offices are well equipped, although staff reported some problems with the IT systems provided. Confidential records relating to foster carers and children/young people are securely stored.

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 does not apply to Local Authority fostering services.

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

This Standard does not apply to Local Authority fostering services.

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

The Inspectors were told that each carer receives a weekly fee of £180.18 for each child placed. An additional £20 per week is paid to carers who have successfully completed their NVQ training. An additional weekly allowance is paid, based on Central Government guidance on the cost of bringing up children. The allowance ranges from £85.75 - £152.67, depending on the age of the child/young person. Carers confirmed that fees and allowances are paid promptly.

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 Service Manager confirmed that the local authority has a statutory Panel to approve all carers and a review Panel that oversees the annual review of each approved carer. The statutory Panel's membership meets the requirements of the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. There is a majority of independent members. To assess this Standard, the Inspector reviewed minutes of Panel meetings and met with the Chair of the Panel. The Chair has been a member of the Panel for six years and was vice-chair for three years, before becoming Chair in January 2005. The Chair is also the nominated representative from education. The Inspector felt that the Chair has a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Panel. The Panel meets fortnightly and the Chair said that papers are sent out to members in advance. The Panel makes a recommendation about approval to the Director of the Children's Trust. The Director is the agreed decision maker and he signs all formal letters informing carers of the Council's decision.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The Service Manager confirmed that the Department is planning to develop support for families in the community by developing the Network Carers Scheme. There are a small number of respite foster carers who provide short breaks. There is also a Shared Care scheme that provides short breaks for children with disabilities. Social Workers told the Inspectors that there is a need for more carers for this scheme. The Inspectors were also told about the PACT scheme that recruits carers to work with young people before they come into the care system.	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?	2
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As noted in Standard 9, there is a need for the Department to ensure that procedures are followed when placing children/young people with family or friends in an emergency. The Service has procedures for responding to emergency referrals but these cannot work if referrals are not received. The Inspectors felt that the procedures for placing children/young people with relatives or friends were well known to managers and social workers in the Fostering Service and the Chair of the Fostering Panel.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

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 2nd February 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

NO

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

NO

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

NO

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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