



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough of Sutton Fostering Services

Civic Offices

St Nicholas Way

Sutton

Surrey

SM1 1EA

Commenced - 7th March 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 Sutton Fostering Services

Address

Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 1EA

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

020 8770 4307

Address

Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 1EA

Fax No:

020 8770 4775

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

2/2/04

Date of Inspection Visit		7th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Barry Khabbazi	090857
Name of Inspector	2	James Pitts	090286
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr Ian Lewis	

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(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**
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- 6. Records**
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- 9. Fostering panels**
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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of London Borough of Sutton Fostering Services. 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.

Two children's services were inspected at this inspection. The general fostering service and the 'Family Link' children with disabilities support service.

The Fostering service:

Sutton Fostering service provides a range of placements and services. The range of services on offer includes permanent and task centred fostering, which covers assessment, rehabilitation, and holiday placements for children at residential schools, short-term placements and preparation for adoption.

Other services provided include an out of hours service, which means that foster carers can provide emergency placements and respite foster care for planned short term breaks.

A number of foster carers are also approved to look after the children of relatives within their extended family.

The 'Family Link' children with disabilities service.

There is also a family link scheme for children with disabilities. This service provides assessment-based services, which include respite care including overnight care and day care, domiciliary care and individual support workers, and access to 'Mencap' playschemes. The overnight respite element was inspected on this occasion.

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 Inspection team would like to thank the children and foster carers who agreed to meet with them, and the staff of the fostering service for their co-operation during this inspection.

The last inspection report contained **4** requirements and **5** recommendations. By the time of this inspection all of the previous requirements and recommendations had been met. There is **1** new requirement and **3** new recommendations in this report.

The views of the younger people placed, raised during this inspection:

Only 8 of the Commission's young people questionnaires were returned by the time of writing this report. The Commission is exploring other ways to consult with children placed. {See 'Areas to be assessed on an ongoing basis between inspections' for details}.

One question asked if the younger people and children placed wanted anything to go in the inspection report. These comments are recorded below:

'X and X are great foster parents and would never put me in danger. I'm extremely lucky and grateful.'

The following standards are currently exceeded: {see identified standard for details}.

Standard 11 - Children's opinions.

Standard 12 - Health care.

Standard 13 - Education.

Standard 21 - Supporting carers.

Areas to be assessed on an ongoing basis between inspections:

In addition to statutory monitoring requirements, consultation with foster carers and the children and younger people placed will continue between this and the next inspection. This will be in the form of attending foster carer support groups and children's events.

Standard 8.6. The effectiveness of current systems of support and information for trans-cultural / trans-racial placements will be monitored and fully assessed in the form of an inspection theme in the next inspection {see Standard 8}

Standard 26. Management of asbestos containing materials will be monitored.

The following evidence of good practice was presented and acknowledged:

Standard 15: 5 references or 5 years of references are collected to explain any gaps in employment and address when staff have left an organisation and worked for an agency to avoid references from the last employer.

Standard 16+20: Supporting social work staff supervision occurs every three weeks.

Standard 26. The children's services are on one site potentially promoting good communication and access to social work colleges.

Standard 30: The fostering panel has foster panel member appraisals planned. The panel has also succeeded in recruiting a panel member that had been in the care system.

Good practice suggestions:

Standard 4: It is suggested only at this stage that the service could include restraints data in the normal management monitoring process.

Standard 23: It is suggested only, that where open learning or other methods i.e. videos, recommended reading etc, are used for foster carer training, that the NVQ elements or other elements are identified and assessed for competency. This information could then be included more effectively in training profiles.

Shortfalls in meeting the National minimum standards:

Standard 4 - Monitoring and ensuring quality performance {See also Standard 21}

This Standard contained minor shortfalls. There were shortfalls in annual reviews, support visits and unannounced visits. The following requirement is set:

Systems for monitoring and effectively addressing shortfalls in annual reviews, support visits and unannounced visits should be implemented.

Standard 15 - Suitability to work with children.

This Standard contained a shortfall. A number of police checks had expired and new CRB's were not applied for at the time of expiry.

The following requirement is therefore set:

The fostering service must confirm in writing with the Commission that the remaining supervising social work CRB checks have been received and of the outcome of these checks

This also affects the rating of Standard 3.3

Standard 22. - Supervision of carers {See also Standard 4}

There were shortfalls in, support visits within the Borough's own guidelines and unannounced visits relative to the NMS. The following recommendation is set:

Support visits should meet the Borough's own guidelines for frequency and unannounced visits should also occur as per Standard 22.6.

Standard 30 - Fostering Panels. This Standard contained a very minor shortfall. The following recommendation is set:

A written procedure to cover decision-making where all the members of the panel are not in agreement should be made known to the panel members.

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:

YES

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:

YES

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:

See summary.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector	Barry Khabbazi	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	James Pitts	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	David town	Signature	_____
Date	16/06/05		_____

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	
4	20 (3) (d) (i) Schedule 1	FS15	The fostering service must confirm in writing to the Commission that the remaining supervising social work CRB checks have been received and of the outcome of these checks.	30/5/05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	4	Systems for monitoring and effectively addressing shortfalls in annual reviews, support visits and unannounced visits should be implemented.
2	22	Support visits should meet the Borough's own guidelines for frequency and unannounced visits should also occur as per Standard 22.6.
1	30	A written procedure to cover decision-making where all the members of the panel are not in agreement should be made known to the panel members.

* 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	16
Survey of placing authorities	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	NO
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	YES
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	7/3/05
Time of Inspection	10.AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	70

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?
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The last inspection report contained the following recommendation:

The Statement of Purpose should contain the number of complaints and a break down of their outcomes. {It would be expected that this information would be updated on an annual basis when the Statement of Purpose is reviewed.}

This information has now been added to the Statement of Purpose.

The previous recommendation is therefore met.

The Statement of Purpose now contains all the elements required to meet this standard.

The Statement of Purpose is also available to the public and to foster carers within the Foster Carers Handbook. The Statement of Purpose clearly states what services are to be provided.

A specific children's guide has been developed by an independent children's organisation.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The management of the general fostering service remains unchanged from that which was reported at the previous two annual inspections. The Responsible Individual is Mr Lewis who is the Fostering Service Manager. Mr Toby Price is the Children's Trust Manager, which incorporates the Children with a Disability service. Both Mr Lewis and Mr Price demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the complex needs of the respective services, and have a detailed understanding of the challenges that the services face as well as ideas for how these challenges can be met. Recent amendments to the Children Act and the implementation of the Children's Bill will pose significant challenges to both services and with this in mind the local authority has established a Children's Trust, with this being piloted more specifically in the children with a disability service. Both Mr Lewis and Mr Price have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to carry on the respective in-house fostering provisions.

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?

2

A full review of the recruitment practice for the employed supervising social work and management staff team of the children with a disability service was undertaken at this inspection. The recruitment of new staff in the general fostering service was also reviewed.

The last inspection report recorded the following:

'Many of the fostering services staff have been in post for many years, bearing this in mind the service manager is aware of the need to obtain Criminal Record Bureau checks after the three year expiry of any checks that were carried out under the previous police check system'. {See Standard 3.3 +15.4}

These checks had expired by the time of this inspection and new CRB checks were not in place. This was the case for both the general fostering service and the 'Family Link' children with disabilities service.

Although this affects the rating of this Standard, a requirement has been made under Standard 15 and will not be duplicated here.

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

One issue of concern to the Commission is whether there is suitable management oversight regarding the operation of the general fostering service. Management information is now more clearly and adequately provided, however, shortfalls in the performance of the statutory functions of the service, for example, foster carer annual reviews and the frequency of support visits is clearly not speedily identifying the issues that need to be addressed. {It is hoped that the introduction of the 'Paris' Database will facilitate this}.

The following recommendation is therefore set:

Systems for monitoring and effectively addressing shortfalls in Annual reviews, support visits and unannounced visits should be implemented.

There were no such issues identified at this inspection regarding the Children with a Disability Service which receive a Standard rating: 3

Good practice suggestions:

It is suggested only at this stage that the service could include restraints data in the normal management monitoring process.

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

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

1

Number of complaints made to CSCI 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
<p>The management teams of both of the services have clear job descriptions identifying their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>There are team managers who take day-to-day responsibility for the services and deputising arrangements are in place.</p> <p>Lines of responsibility are clearly defined.</p>		

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
<p>The last inspection report contained the following recommendation: 'When removing choice, or using equipment to restrict access for the protection of the child placed, written risk assessments should be carried out to demonstrate how safety outweighs choice'.</p> <p>Written risk assessments are now in place for the case originally identified and the general fostering team manager assured the inspector that these are in place for all restrictions of access and liberty required for the protection of the child where not age appropriate.</p> <p>The previous recommendation and this Standard are now currently met.</p> <p>The foster homes that were visited as a part of this inspection all comfortably accommodated the children / young people who are placed and were free of identifiable hazards. They were adequately furnished and maintained to high standards of cleanliness and hygiene.</p> <p>The foster carers organised an Easter egg hunt that was attended by the inspector. The children attending had the opportunity to meet and play with other fostered children in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. The younger children had the opportunity to get really muddy, and the younger people fostered had more of an organisational role in the events. It was also pleasing to see that all the children won prizes and not just those who found the most eggs.</p>		

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**

Placements are made with carers who meet the foster child's religious and linguistic background wherever possible. The fostering service is continuing with the recruitment campaign that was referred to at the previous annual inspection in order to attract more carers from a variety of backgrounds. {See Standard 8 regarding trans-racial/cultural placements} The fostering service also recruits from the gay community and has carers who are registered as people with a disability. The service continues to have a comprehensive marketing strategy in place to improve its list of carers from diverse backgrounds and to improve upon the level of retention of existing foster carers.

The fostering service has a promoting equal opportunities and valuing diversity policy in the Foster Carer's Handbook. The foster carers address these issues during their preparation training .

There are foster carers on the register who provide specialist services e.g. to children who have disabilities. These carers receive extra financial support and are linked into additional community support services to ensure that these children's needs are met.

Evidence from the children's questionnaires indicated that the children felt they were supported in their education and were given opportunities and encouraged to take part in activities and interests.

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**

Due to a limited pool of carers from minority backgrounds and other placement concerns, for example placing in a familiar area, there are some trans-cultural / trans-racial placements. {See also Standard 7}

There was no direct evidence gathered at this inspection that indicated that where trans-cultural / trans-racial placements are made, cultural and religious needs were not being met. This Standard is therefore currently rated at '3'.

However, Standard 8.6 refers to the foster families in these situations being provided with extra support, training and information.

The extra support, training and information are currently only provided by interaction with the carers supporting social worker. This obviously relies on that social worker's own individual knowledge of different cultures/religions and their varying experience. This will of course vary from individual to individual.

To address the effectiveness of the current limited and varying system of support, this area will be assessed in detail in the form an inspection theme at the next inspection.

It is expected that additional systems will be needed, to fully meet this Standard once this area has been fully scrutinised.

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
<p>The last inspection report contained the following requirement: Criminal Record Bureau on foster carers must be of enhanced check standard in all cases. This has now been rectified and the requirement is currently met.</p> <p>The last inspection report contained the following recommendation: The fostering service should establish a means by which the unauthorised absence of children in fostering placements can be monitored in order to identify any trends that may emerge. This information is now collated and evaluated and a list sent to the Commission. This recommendation is currently met.</p> <p>The children continue to have access to an independent advocacy service. The foster carers who were visited by the Inspection team are aware of permissible sanctions they can apply to children. There is a specific new bullying policy and guidance to foster carers. There is a policy to follow in the event that children go missing. Foster carers reported that they are usually provided with all the relevant information to enable them to care for children safely.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9) The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>As reported at the previous annual inspection, there is guidance in the Foster Carers Handbook about how to work with birth parents, in the case of both the general and children with a disability service. This was observed to be followed up at foster carer training sessions attended by the inspectors.</p> <p>Agreements on contact are arranged in conjunction with the placing social worker and form part of the placement agreement. The fostering service continues to provide financial support to ensure that contact arrangements take place.</p> <p>Evidence from foster carers indicates that children are supported to maintain regular contact with their birth families and that this is actively encouraged where it is appropriate and safe to do so. Foster carers are expected to record and maintain records of the outcomes of birth parent visits.</p>		

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

The London Borough of Sutton provides consultation questionnaires for foster carers, the children and younger people being fostered and the parents of children and younger people fostered. A survey has also recently been conducted.

The following evidence of currently exceeding this standard has been presented.

Standard 11. Children's opinions: – in addition to questionnaires and events-

- All children using services that are provided by the London Borough of Sutton have access an independent Advocacy Service.
- The children also are able to make their views known via a magazine they edit called 'My Shout'.
- On a monthly basis the Advocacy Service hosts a meeting between Looked After Children and the Executive Head of Children's Services and the Lead councillor for Looked After Children.
- The 'Jigsaw' advocacy project is also developing the involvement of children with disabilities in the running of the 'Children's Trust' that provides the 'Family link service'.
- The birth children of foster carers also have events and there is a newsletter planned for this group.

The Local Authority and the fostering service are once again commended for their commitment and approach to consultation with Looked After Children. Many other local authorities could learn from this approach.

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?**

4

The systems that the service has in place for monitoring and responding to the health care needs of children remain as those reported at the previous annual inspection. These systems continue to be effectively applied.

Each child has a health monitoring form completed about them and any other significant information is drawn from the initial placement information and subsequent child care reviews. The foster carers have comprehensive guidance in respect of their responsibilities regarding the health of the children in their care. The Local Authority makes available to foster carers a Health Support Officer to promote good health. Similarly there is a Child Psychologist for Looked After Children to advise on child mental health issues. Foster carers are given financial support to encourage the children to engage in leisure activities. Responses from the children's questionnaires confirm that they are involved in regular activities. All foster carers continue to receive training in First Aid.

With regard to the children with a disability service, there is clear and well documented information available to carers about the individual needs of children. Healthcare responsibility remains with the birth parents although information on how to respond to any specific health issues that may arise is provided to carers.

The following evidence of currently exceeding this standard has been presented.

Standard 12. Health care–

- The Local Authority makes available to foster carers a Health Support Officer to promote good health, provide support, health assessments and surgeries for 'Looked After Children'.
- A health book is produced which is kept by the child as an additional record to promote better monitoring
- There is are 2 full time Child Psychologists for Looked After Children to advise on child mental health issues. A positive outcome for this is that there is no waiting list.
- Foster carers are given financial support to encourage the children to engage in leisure activities and a leisure pass is provided.
- There is a joint funding approach developing into a joint funding panel involving Health, Education and Social Services.

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?**

4

Comments from the children / young people, foster carers' and placing officers' questionnaires, confirmed that educational support is occurring. The case tracking exercise showed that each child has a Personal Education Plan and there is a comprehensive PEP manual. Individual Education Plans were in place where required for cases tracked. The fostering service supports children of school age by providing them with a computer and internet access.

The fostering service has introduced increased monitoring of educational attainment which will also result in an annual awards scheme to celebrate children's achievements.

With regard to the short break care service, the children who use this are in the full care of their birth parents and it is therefore not an area of responsibility for the service to monitor educational needs.

The following evidence of currently exceeding this standard has been presented.

Standard 13 Education.

- The Local Authority has an Educational Support Officer to work with children and foster carers to improve on educational attainment.
- Financial support is provided to children if they require extra tuition.
- There is a system in place to monitor school attendance. A call centre calls schools twice a day and reports absences.
- The fostering service has introduced increased monitoring of educational attainment which will also result in an annual awards scheme to celebrate children's achievements.
- There is a joint funding approach developing into a joint funding panel involving health Education and social services.

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 supervising social worker addresses issues pertaining to independence throughout the fostering period, with increasing emphasis as preparation for independence becomes more imminent. When preparing for independent living, pathway plans are used with young people who are encouraged to be actively involved in decision-making processes.

The last inspection report contained the following requirement:

The Fostering Service must ensure that foster carers receive training and guidance in order that all the children receive age and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning independence skills.

Specific training courses are now run and these are being further developed. There is also specific guidance for financial arrangements for younger people aged 16 and over in foster care. This requirement is currently met.

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?

2

The last inspection report contained the following requirement:

Tracking of information at the foster carer approval stage must identify any gaps in the required level and type of information that is available prior to approval being made.

The team manager audits the files and evidence of this was seen in files sampled. In addition none of the approval information was missing from files sampled on this occasion. This requirement is currently met.

{It is hoped the introduction of the new 'Paris' database will also support accuracy in this area.}

The inspection team must report that significant concerns arose at this inspection about the lack of diligence of the London Borough of Sutton in taking up CRB checks. A number of police checks had expired and new CRB's were not applied for at the time of expiry.

(details of which have been provided to the Authority). The fact that the Authority has not shown the degree of diligence necessary in taking these up far earlier amounts to a failure. This was the case for both the general fostering service and the 'family link' children with disabilities service.

The authority is therefore required to do the following to address these issues:

The fostering service must confirm in writing with the Commission when the remaining supervising social work CRB checks have been received and of the outcome of these checks.

{The Personnel Department is reminded that the actual CRB checks must be made available to inspectors upon request.}

The following evidence of good practice was presented and acknowledged:

Standard 15: 5 references or 5 years of references are collected to explain any gaps in employment and address when staff have left an organisation and worked for an agency to avoid references from the last employer.

Total number of staff of the agency:

10

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

3

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

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

The fostering service continues to have clear lines of management accountability.

Staff receive regular supervision and support from the Team Manager.

The core areas of work of the supervising social workers are regularly monitored and the service is in the process of implementing the 'Paris' database system as a method for improved data monitoring. Once this system is fully in place it should greatly assist the service in highlighting tasks that require attention as well as aid information gathering for statistical and management purposes.

The current marketing strategy is due to be re-evaluated and updated.

The following evidence of good practice was presented and acknowledged:

Supporting social work staff supervision occurs at a higher than average frequency of every three weeks.

The foster carer recruitment and retention programme is now being additionally supported by the creation of a specific additional post of assistant team manager who has a specific brief for this area.

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**

The fostering service has had a significant change in staffing in the last year and have had vacant posts, all of which have now been filled with new appointees who are due to commence shortly. Staff that were interviewed were positive about the support and training they received and the way the service is developing.

The recruitment of foster carers continues to focus at recruiting a range of carers to meet the needs of the children who are to be provided with a service.

There is an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support for the size of both of the services.

There is a clearly set out assessment process detailing all the qualities, competences and aptitudes expected from prospective foster 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?****3**

The last inspection report contained the following recommendation:

The Whistle Blowing Policy in the Foster Carers Handbook should include contact details and explanation of the National Care Standards Commission involvement in the complaints or whistle blowing process.

These details are now in both the Foster Carer's Handbook and the Children and Young Person's Guide. This requirement is currently met. The effectiveness of these measures, considering the frequently changing name of the inspecting authority, should be examined at the next inspection.

The service and foster carers have recently redesigned the Foster Carer's Handbook. The handbook is comprehensive, contains all the required guidance, contains additional guidance and contacts, and is set out in a clear, accessible and easily updateable style.

Support from supervising social workers was an area of good practice and much positive comment that was again raised by the foster carers. The consensus of the carers that gave their views to the Inspection Team is that the face-to-face support is appreciated and does much to support the placements of children. {See also Standard 21 which is exceeded.} The file tracking process confirmed that the procedure is to ensure that foster carers are in receipt of enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks. The fostering service has comprehensive health and safety policies for all those involved in the service and adequate insurance to cover all eventualities.

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 new foster carers' training co-ordinator is currently planning joint training with the fostering service staff and carers. Foster carers are also involved in presenting training.

Annual appraisals were also inspected and in place for all staff files sampled.

Regular training courses are organised. Some are general courses i.e. health and safety, child abuse and while others are specifics i.e. Post Qualification, detachment, challenging behaviours etc.

In interviews, staff informed the Inspectors that new staff follow an induction programme.

Foster carer training occurs at times to suit carers, for example in the evenings and weekends. Some open learning and other formats for learning are also available.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Evidence from staff interviews, and from employment practises that were reviewed, show that all staff are conversant with the content of job descriptions which outline their roles and are aware of their duties and responsibilities.

There is evidence to show that social work staff who worked directly with children and foster carers are supervised regularly and records of these sessions are kept {see below}.

Staff meetings are also regularly held in the case of both services, some of these meetings involve joint discussion with other teams in the children's services department.

The following evidence of good practice was presented and acknowledged:

Supporting social work staff supervision occurs at a higher than average frequency of every three weeks.

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?**

4

Evidence from the foster carer's tracking interviews illustrates that foster carers continue to be fully aware of the role of the supervising social workers. Foster carers again commented very favourably about the level of support that they received. Foster carers are expected to be visited monthly (in the case of task centred placements) and no less than three monthly (in the case of permanent placements) basis. Regular telephone contact also occurs. The Foster Carer's Handbook continues to provide guidance in respect of all the areas identified in Standard 21.2. {See Standard 18 for more details about the new Foster Carer's Handbook}.

Carers who spoke with the Inspection team during visits, and supporting social worker interviews, confirmed that both groups had a clear understanding of their own and others' roles and responsibilities.

The following evidence of currently exceeding this standard has been presented.

Standard 21 - Supporting carers.

- Support has been an area of good practice consistently raised by foster carers.
- Extra funding has been made available to support foster carers to maintain positive placements.
- Support visits are as needed and where required weekly visits occur.
- There is a fostering development worker post for the general fostering service, and a new carer support post in the 'Family Link' scheme.
- The organisation has developed a new and additional post of assistant team manager for the general fostering service. This post has a specific brief to monitor and support recruitment and retention of new foster carers.
- The 'Family Link' scheme also has a new assistant team manager post.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)**The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?**

2

The foster placement agreements seen from the tracking exercise matched the service being provided in the homes of the foster carers who were visited. All foster carers have a named supervising social worker who is expected to visit on a monthly to three monthly basis depending on the type of placement being provided. More frequent visits are made on occasions if additional support is required to promote a successful placement. All information necessary for foster carers to provide safe and positive practice, including information about complaints, investigations allegations and removal from the register is contained in the Foster Carer's Handbook.

Systems of practical support for foster carers include prompt allowances payments, support for foster care associations, access to social work support and the provision of respite care where appropriate.

In one case that was tracked it was shown that these visits had not occurred to the departmentally required frequency and in one instance not for two consecutive months, the reason for this could not be given.

Support visits should meet the Borough's own guidelines for frequency and unannounced visits should also occur as per Standard 22.6.

There were no such issues identified at this inspection regarding the Children with a Disability Service which receive a Standard rating: 3

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The last inspection report contained the following requirement: the monitoring and recording of the training undertaken by individual carers must be improved upon.

This is now being electronically monitored and printed off for inclusion in reviews.

This requirement is currently met.

The last inspection report contained the following recommendation:

The service should explore the establishment of baseline expectations that carers should undertake at least a certain degree of training to update their skills and to remain aware of developments. It is acknowledged by the Inspection team that the service is aware of these issues and recognise that improvements should be made.

There are now baseline expectations for training of 30 hours per year. This is also clarified in the Foster Carer's Handbook. This recommendation is currently met.

Good practice suggestions:

It is suggested only, that where open learning or other methods i.e. videos, recommended reading etc, are used for foster carer training, that the NVQ elements or other elements are identified and assessed for competency. This information could then be included more effectively in training profiles.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Foster carers visited were aware of the importance of record keeping and the need to keep records in a confidential manner.

The Foster Carer's Handbook and pack contains a section regarding the foster carers' responsibilities for record keeping.

The foster care service maintains a case record for each foster child or young person in their care and also for the foster carers. These records were available for inspection.

The foster carer files demonstrated that entries were made of supervision visits by supporting social workers. A record of training and all panel minutes and reviews were present. These files contained all the relevant information and documentation and were organised and contained no obvious omissions. The fostering service manager audits these regularly.

The children's files examined at the time of the inspection contained no obvious omissions.

Training and guidance are available for foster carers to support children to come to terms with previous life events. Training and support also covers the foster carer's role in the production of 'life story books'.

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
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Confidential records are kept securely and safely in locked cupboards and are accessible to authorised staff only. Written entries on the files made by staff in the unit were generally legible and professional.

The fostering agency is subject to the local authority's Access to Files policy and the new freedom of information act, baring exemptions.

Separate records are kept for staff, foster carers and children.

Management information is kept regarding complaints.

There is policy and guidance regarding confidentiality and this is clarified for foster carers in the foster carers handbook.

Rates of pay recorded below can be enhanced significantly, for complex or disruptive cases etc.

The figures below refer to a snapshot on the 7/3/2005.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:		72
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:		26
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:		32
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:		10
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:		X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	215.46	Maximum £ 328.32 +

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 office was found to be easily accessible to non-wheelchair user fostering service staff. The office is fully furnished with all necessary equipments including IT and communication systems.

Suspected asbestos containing materials were identified during the inspection. The main building, which is used for the fostering service, is an old building with a relatively high quantity of suspected asbestoses containing materials. The materials positions have been located in an inventory and some areas sampled and tested for asbestos content. These areas have been risk assessed and appropriate action carried out as required under Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002. This area appears to be currently managed within regulations but will continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis.

The following evidence of good practice was presented and acknowledged:

Standard 26. The children's services are on one site potentially promoting good communication and access to social work colleges.

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

Resources observed during the course of the inspection appeared sufficient for the purpose.

As this is a Local Authority run service and not a private agency, it does not need to make a profit or balance income with expenditure.

This Standard has therefore been graded with a '9' to indicate that it is not applicable at this time.

However this Standard may be invoked if the Commission believe at any time that insufficient resources are being allocated.

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 is a Local Authority run service and the finance department of the council maintains the finances. The service is subject to external and internal audits.

As this is a Local Authority run service and not a private agency, this Standard does not fully apply.

This Standard has therefore been graded with a '9' to indicate that it is not applicable at this time.

However this Standard may be invoked if the Commission believe at any time that sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice are not being applied.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is a written policy on fostering allowances and this is available in the Foster Carers Handbook in the case of each of the respective services. There were no concerns expressed from the foster carers who were visited by the Inspection team about regular and prompt payments of fees. Allowances paid to friend and/or family carers are at the same rate as other foster carers. Carers for the children with a disability service are provided with an allowance based on the numbers of hours that care is provided. Comments made by foster carers indicate that extra financial support and equipment is provided when the assessed needs of children in placement deem this to be necessary.

Additional funding has been provided to specific foster carers for extensions / adaptations to properties in order to facilitate maintaining long-term placements of children and or placements of children with a disability.

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?

2

The Executive Head of Children's Services appoints and terminates the appointment of panel members as well as being responsible for making decisions on the recommendations that arise from panel meetings. The Fostering Panel has clear written policies and procedures, which have recently been updated. The terms of reference of the panel do now highlight the quality assurance function of the panel in terms of consistency of assessment of the foster carers and the monitoring the range and type carers available in comparison to the needs of the children. The panel has access to medical advice although the Medical Advisor is not restricted to this role and is a full member of the panel. In all respects the panel is properly constituted.

Standard 30.2 requires the service to have a written procedure to cover decision-making where all the members of the panel are not in agreement.

Although the team manager stated there was a written policy the panel chair was not aware of this.

The following recommendation is therefore set to address this very minor shortfall:

A written procedure to cover decision-making where all the members of the panel are not in agreement should be made known to the panel members.

The following evidence of good practice was presented and acknowledged:

Standard 30: The Fostering panel has foster panel member appraisals planned.

The Fostering panel has also succeeded in recruiting a panel member who had been in the care system themselves.

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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There is recognition that children receiving home based care from the children with disabilities team remain, in all of the current cases, the responsibility of their birth parents. This is reflected in the policies and procedures of the children with disabilities service, which were most recently reviewed in February of this year.

Short-term breaks are offered to carers and children in the general fostering service, a fact that was positively commented upon during the feedback that was received by the Inspection Team.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Standard met?

3

The foster families of children placed under Regulation 38 (Family and friends as carers) who provided feedback to the Inspection team were unanimous in feeling supported by the general fostering service.
--

The fostering service points out that family and friend carers are not expected to provide some of the services that other carers do, for example to be on the rota of carers to provide placements out of hours. This results in a lower level of expectation upon them that would otherwise be expected of carers who accept children who are unknown to them as family or friends.

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 commenced on 7 March 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	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
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	<input type="checkbox"/>

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	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/> YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/> 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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