



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Time For Children

**24 Mossford Street
London
E3 4TH**

Lead Inspector
Lea Alexander

Announced Inspection
6th February 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Time For Children
Address	24 Mossford Street London E3 4TH
Telephone number	0870 241 6333
Fax number	
Email address	admin@timeforchildren.org
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Time For Children Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Janet Digby-Baker
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 20th September 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

Time for Children is an independent fostering agency that was established in 1999. The agency specialises in providing short and long-term placements for sibling groups. Their motto is "enabling brothers and sisters to remain together".

Time for Children prides itself on being small, friendly and like an extended family. The agency has approximately 45 children in placement. The statement of purpose says "Time for Children has a passionate belief in the welfare of the whole child, which includes personal, physical and social education".

The agency offices are based in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, five minutes away from Mile End tube station. The offices also accommodate an accredited contact centre. The agency has foster carers all over London and some in the Essex and Kent areas. The majority of staff is employed on a "teleworking" system that means they are based within their homes and in contact by phone and computer.

SUMMARY

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

This was an announced inspection by one Inspector that took place over the course of a week, although there were additional visits to observe the panel and to attend a foster carer-training event. During the course of the inspection the Inspector met with the Registered Manager and the Responsible Individual. The Inspector interviewed three of the agencies social workers and two social work assistants. The Inspector visited four foster placements and during these visits the foster carers and foster children were spoken with separately. The Inspector also viewed the communal spaces used by the children and their bedrooms.

The Inspector met with the agencies Financial Director and viewed financial records. The Inspector sampled the records of four foster carers and four children in depth and also viewed other relevant documentation including policy and procedures, databases and personnel records.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection sent out a number of questionnaires to foster carers, children and placing authorities to obtain their views on the service provided. 1 completed questionnaire was received from a placing authority and 4 foster carers and 6 children also completed and returned questionnaires. Feedback from all of these was generally positive.

The Inspector would like to thank the agency, foster carers and children for their assistance in completing this inspection.

What the service does well:

The agency is commended for exceeding National Minimum Standards in three areas.

Time for Children is effectively managed and staffed by people with appropriate qualifications and experience and provides suitable foster carers. The agency complies with employment legislation and operates from suitable premises with appropriate equipment and resources.

The agency has produced a comprehensive statement of purpose and has developed policies and procedures for the day to day running of the agency and the operation of its panel. A comprehensive handbook for carers has also been developed. Appropriate case and administrative records are maintained and the agency has sound financial practises. Foster carers receive prompt payments.

The agency has developed monitoring systems and consultation processes to ensure the quality of its service. The agency promotes contact, development and good health for the children it places. Time for Children also promotes

educational achievement and prepares children for adulthood. The agencies panel meets regularly and is effective in making good quality decisions.

Time for Children values diversity in its day-to-day operations, training and policies. Foster carers receive regular training tailored to meet their needs and staffs are supported to undertake further professional training and development. Staff and foster carers are appropriately supported and supervised.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Social workers meet regularly with foster carers and maintain up to date records of all contact. Health and safety issues within the foster home are routinely addressed at each visit and a formal health and safety assessment undertaken annually. The sons and daughters of foster carers have they're needs considered.

A summary of complaints and there outcome is incorporated into the statement of purpose. A copy of the children's guide is sent directly to children according to their age and understanding. The agency has developed a range of databases. Foster carers have received written confirmation of the allowances payable.

Foster carers have received training to address issues of children's transition to adulthood and independent living.

What they could do better:

The instigation and outcome of child protection enquiries must be notified to the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Personnel records required by regulation must be maintained and be available for inspection, including supervision records and the agencies own Criminal Records Bureau checks for staff and foster carers.

Foster carers should be subject to an annual review, and given appropriate support when providing transracial placements. Consideration should be given to an additional forum for young people.

A number of policies and procedures as identified in the main text require revision or development.

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

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12.

The agency promotes good health care for the children in its care.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers receive core and refresher training addressing health and hygiene issues and health promotion. Some of the foster carers met by the Inspector had additionally received external first aid training funded by the agency.

The agencies core training and its policies and procedures clearly outline to foster carers their responsibilities in registering children for health care provision. Each foster carer maintains a diary for the children in their care, and the Inspector sampled several of these. This evidenced that children are benefiting from regular healthcare appointments including the GP, dentist and optician and that the outcome of these appointments is recorded in the diary. Records maintained by the agency for children include copies of placing authority reviews, and these evidenced that foster carers provide appropriate feedback regarding healthcare issues at these meetings.

Discussion with foster carers evidenced that where possible information regarding a child's healthcare needs was available prior to their taking up placement. Where an emergency placement was made foster carers advised that all relevant healthcare information was made available promptly.

Discussion at the Foster Carers support group and correspondence in Foster Carers records evidenced that the agency recognises the importance of good nutrition for children. The agency has contacted all foster carers asking them to put forward suggestions for a healthy eating cookbook that can be distributed amongst foster carers.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 & 30.

The agency has developed a range of policies and systems that it utilises to keep children safe.

EVIDENCE:

The Inspector was satisfied throughout the whole inspection process that the Registered Manager is a suitable person to manage the service. The Inspector was shown current an enhanced level Criminal Records Bureau check for the Registered Manager and Responsible Individual. The agency is developing a system to ensure that these are renewed every three years.

During the inspection process the Inspector visited the homes of four foster carers. All of the homes visited were found to be comfortably furnished, warm, hygienic and well maintained. The Inspector saw the bedrooms of four children and noted that these were child focused with appropriate stimulating toys, books, equipment and items of personal significance to the child. The agency provides each child with a bicycle and swimming lessons, and extends this to include the foster carers own children.

As well as meeting with foster carers in their homes, the Inspector also met with a group of foster carers during an agency training event. Foster carers were found to have an awareness of the Commission for Social Care Inspection and positively contributed towards the inspection process.

Foster carer records examined by the Inspector evidenced that the agencies foster care agreement specifies the Commission's inspection process and the requirement to be interviewed if requested.

Records maintained by the Link Social Worker indicate that an annual health and safety inspection is carried out and recorded and that any potential health and safety hazards identified during visits are addressed as they arise. A requirement to revise the agencies Health and Safety policy has been implemented since the last inspection. Health and Safety training are provided as part of the agencies core-training programme, and the foster carers handbook provides supplementary information and guidance.

The agency employs a placement officer who is the first point of contact with placing authorities. The agency aims to ensure an appropriate match between child and foster carer by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant professionals, the child and their family and potential carers, their families and other children in placement.

All of the agencies foster carers undertake core and refresher training that addresses child protection. The foster carers handbook also offers guidance on safe caring. The agencies policies and procedures clearly identify acceptable and unacceptable disciplinary measures, and all of the foster carers visited at home were aware of, understood and implemented this policy. The foster carers handbook contains accessible information regarding bullying. During a visit to one foster carer the Inspector was advised of the steps the foster carer was taking to support the child with bullying at school. This included emotional and practical support to the child and telephone contact and attendance at meetings at the school in an attempt to address this issue.

During the current inspection year a child protection investigation has taken place within one of the agencies foster care placements. The agency attended multi disciplinary strategy meetings and disclosed relevant information. The agency fully participated in the strategy meeting process and followed up the recommendations of the meeting. This included frequent unscheduled calls to the foster home and a period of intensive one to one training to address the issues highlighted by the allegation. The situation has been fully relayed and monitored by the agencies panel. In the Inspectors view the agency have responded to the allegation and enquiry entirely appropriately.

A different local authority investigated a second child protection allegation. This concluded that insufficient evidence was found to support the allegation. The Inspector noted that the Commission for Social Care Inspection had not been notified by the agency of the outcome of the local authority investigation.

The agency operates a clear written recruitment and selection procedure for appointing staff. The Inspector sampled 6 staff personnel files that evidenced

staff are interviewed as part of the recruitment process. Personnel records indicate that all social workers are professionally qualified. Past employment records and discussion with social work staff evidenced that all have previous relevant social work experience obtained working with children.

Examination of personnel records indicated that some progress had been made in obtaining missing records, as required by the previous inspection. However, some gaps were noted to remain. The agency must ensure that evidence of qualifications and copies of references are obtained and are available for inspection.

The Inspector viewed a random selection of five employee Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. Whilst three of these were in order, one was noted to be more than three years out of date and another was a photocopy of a check obtained by a different employer. The Inspector also sampled CRB checks for six foster carers. Two foster carers were found to have photocopied CRB's obtained by a different organisation. Three of the CRB's viewed were noted to be more than three years old.

The Inspector met with the Chair of the agencies panel and also attended and observed a meeting of the panel. The panel is constituted in line with Regulation 24 and its meetings are quorate as required by Regulation 25. Clear written policies and procedures are available to the panel although the Inspector noted that these did not include guidance on decision making for a split panel. The panel has an independent chair. They have many years experience in the child-care and legal professions. Panel members receive documentation prior to the panel meeting.

Observation of the panel meeting evidenced that it operates with autonomy and independence. The fostering panel was observed to provide a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process – in particular to monitor and review the work of assessors: to provide feedback and to ensure that there is a consistency of approach in assessment across the service.

Since the last inspection the agency has arranged a joint training day between panel members and social work staff, and advises that they plan to run a similar event in the coming year.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

7, 13 & 31.

The agency values diversity and promotes educational achievement.

EVIDENCE:

In its core training programme the agency addresses with foster carers issues around equal opportunity, valuing diversity, promoting self-esteem and caring for a child with a disability. This is supplemented with information and guidance contained in the foster carers handbook.

During separate discussions with an agency social worker and a foster carer the Inspector was given a practise example of how cross-cultural placements are supported. An African heritage child was placed with a Caribbean heritage foster carer. It was identified that the child would benefit from access to foods from their own culture, and the foster carer was given information, recipes and support to prepare appropriate meals.

Through discussion with agency staff and foster carers the Inspector was given examples of how the service recognises and encourages children to develop their individual talents. One child is being supported to play table tennis and another child with an interest in ballet was taken to see a performance.

At the time of this inspection the agency has was noted to have several transracial placements. The Inspector visited one of these placements as part of the inspection process and spoke with the link social worker. The responsible authority should provide the foster family with additional training, support and information to enable the best possible care and to enable the

child to develop a positive understanding of their heritage. The agency should provide supplementary systems to support transracial placements, including long term action planning. Discussion with the link social worker and the foster carer and examination of case recording did not evidence that this was occurring. This issue had been identified at the previous inspection in September 2004, and a good practise recommendation in this area is therefore restated.

The Inspector formed the view that the agency gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of children in foster care and ensures that they are encouraged to attain their full potential. The agency's core training and handbook for foster carers clearly outlines the role of foster carers in school contact, for example parent's evenings, open days and discussions with teachers. Discussion with the four foster carers visited evidenced that this occurs. All of the foster carers spoken to by the Inspector had a clear understanding and commitment to the agency's values of regular school attendance, completion of homework and participation in other school activities.

Visits to foster homes evidenced the provision of appropriate toys and educational items relating to the child's developmental age and to promote learning. Some children told the Inspector that other children within the home assisted them with their homework and other studies. Where a computer is unavailable within the home the agency will provide one. Sampling of children's records and discussion with foster carers evidenced marked improvements in children's attendance and achievements at school. Children were also engaged in extra curricular activities such as after school clubs and sports activities.

The agency does not provide a short term breaks service.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

10 & 11.

The agency promotes contact arrangements for children and promotes consultation.

EVIDENCE:

Time for children is able to provide an accredited, high quality contact centre at its office premises. The contact centre is child focused and provides a homely environment. The contact centre comprises of three contact rooms, a fully equipped kitchen with dining area and a nappy changing area. Facilities for children include a garden with a sandpit, a play station, books and a range of toys.

The agency promotes contact as directed by the placing authority. In addition to providing a venue for contact the agency is able to provide transport and a contact supervisor. The Inspectors discussions with foster carers evidenced that link social workers support them in managing any issues or difficulties arising from contact visits. Link social workers recording of visits and discussions with foster carers evidenced that they share their perceptions of the impact of contact upon the child and that this is feedback to the placing authority.

Discussions with foster carers' evidenced their understanding of the importance of listening to children. It was also evidenced that during link workers visits to the home they spoke with children and ascertained their views. The agency also considers the views of children as expressed at their placing authority review. The previous inspection had recommended that the agency consider an additional forum where young people can raise concerns. During this inspection there was discussion on how the agency might develop its practise

in this area, particularly considering the wide geographical spread of its service users. One suggestion for future development might be an online chat room for children.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

14 & 29.

The fostering service is developing its expertise in supporting young people into adulthood. Foster carers allowances are paid promptly.

EVIDENCE:

The agency was originally established to provide foster care to children aged 0 to 12 years. However, some children who have been in long-term placements with the agency have surpassed this upper age limit and are moving towards adulthood.

The agency has developed a policy aimed at supporting young people towards adulthood and independent living. The previous inspection had recommended that this be revised to include guidance for foster carers on the agencies expectations of them in preparing children and young people for independent or semi independent living. This remains outstanding.

Since the last inspection the agency has run a training day aimed at foster carers with older children to explore some of the issues around caring for adolescents and looking at how children might be supported towards independent living. The Inspector was advised that this training day was well received by foster carers of older children and is likely to be followed up.

The Inspector visited one older child at their foster placement. Discussion with them and their foster carer evidenced that the child was being supported to develop skills around activities of daily living such as snack and meal preparation, laundry and ironing and budgeting.

From discussion with foster carers the Inspector evidenced that carers allowances are paid promptly. Foster carers receive an agreed allowance and those spoken to by the Inspector were clear about the payments and allowances available on approval.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

1, 2, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 & 32.

Children, foster carers and staff benefit from a well-managed fostering agency that provides a good quality service.

EVIDENCE:

The agency operates from a residential style property in Mile End. The office is also an accredited contact centre. However there are dedicated administrative and meeting facilities within the house. The premises have facilities for the secure retention of records and an appropriate security system. The agency is committed to teleworking and the majority of staff work from home. Staffs are provided with an equipped base from which they work. This includes a computer, printer, network capabilities and a mobile phone.

The Inspector sampled the agencies statement of purpose and noted that this addresses the requirements of Standard 1 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards. The statement of purpose is annotated to indicate that it was reviewed in January 2006. This includes the agencies management structure, services provided, objectives and values, procedures for recruiting, approving and training carers, panel procedures and the numbers of carers, children and staff. A recommendation from the previous inspection has been implemented and a summary of complaints and their outcome is now included in the statement of purpose. The Inspector also viewed the agencies policies and procedures and found these accurately reflected the statement of purpose. The statement of purpose includes a copy of the agencies business plan.

The agency has developed in consultation with foster carers and children an easy to read children's guide. All of the children spoken to during the course of this inspection were familiar with the guide and had their own copy. The Registered Manager advised that the guide is sent directly to children, subject to their age and understanding. The guide includes a summary of the services offered by the agency, information relating to independent advocacy, the agencies whistle blowing procedure, complaints and the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

The Registered Manager has a professional social work qualification and has worked in the field of children and families social work for many years including work as a family court welfare officer, expert witness and guardian ad litem. A senior social worker has been identified as the agencies decision maker in the Managers absence and they will shortly be commencing NVQ level 4 studies.

Staff spoken to during the course of the inspection identified that they felt well supported to carry out their jobs. Both staff and foster carers commented how they appreciated and valued the family atmosphere and ethos promoted by the Registered Manager. From discussion with the Registered Manager and social work staff it was evidenced that the agency has a clear management structure with well-defined lines of accountability. Social work staffs cover clearly identified geographical areas. Senior social work staff supervises social work assistants. Clear arrangements are in place to identify the person in charge when the manager is absent.

The Inspector formed the view that the Registered Manager exercises effective leadership and that the agency is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers a good quality service.

The Inspector met with the Registered Manager and Responsible Individual at the commencement of the inspection, and at several times whilst conducting the inspection. Through these discussions and contacts the Inspector was satisfied both were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

The agency has developed its quality assurance processes and details these in its statement of purpose. These include the monitoring of children's placements, monitoring of staff recruitment, a monitoring process for foster carers and an overall monitoring of the organisation.

The Inspector met with the agencies Financial Director and during discussion sampled various accounting information and established the agencies financial practises and policies. Information provided included the charges for the agencies services and details of payments to individual foster carers.

From discussion and by sampling records and documentation required by regulation the Inspector was satisfied that there is an appropriate level of clerical and administrative support within the agency. All of the staff spoken to by the Inspector were aware of the agencies policies and procedures and confirmed they were able to readily access copies of these.

From discussion with staff and with the Registered Manager the Inspector established that social workers receive regular supervision. However, sampling of supervision minutes evidenced that recording of supervision meetings was inconsistent. Social workers employed by the agency have opportunities to continue their professional training and development. Two social workers have recently completed a long running course at the Tavistock Institute looking at supporting children's placements. Another social worker is being supported to develop their skills as a trainer. The agency also offers student placements that are supervised by a social worker who has attained accredited practise teach status. Discussion with the agencies social workers evidenced that they keep up to date with professional developments through attending training courses, through their quarterly meetings with other social workers in the agency and through professional publications and web sites.

The agency Responsible Individual is also the Director of Training and Development. The agency has a clear plan for the training and development of all staff involved in fostering through induction, post qualifying and in service training. Assistant social work staff has a specific core-training programme that includes the agencies policies and procedures, health and safety, confidentiality, equal opportunities and complaints. In addition there is training to develop report writing skills and supervising contact. There are

regular refresher sessions in these areas. The agency also supports assistant social workers to undertake professional social work qualification.

The Inspector located job descriptions and completed annual appraisals on each of the personnel files sampled. Assistant social workers and social workers have opportunities to meet regularly with their peer group for team meetings.

Based on discussion with staff, foster carers and by examination of records required by regulation the Inspector formed the view that the agency has adequate numbers 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. The agency is able to retain a committed staff group and has extremely low staff turn over.

The agency periodically advertises for carers within the M25 using local newspapers. In discussion with foster carers it appeared that a significant number had heard about and contacted the agency following positive "word of mouth". The agency has a clearly defined assessment process, which foster carers stated they were made aware of at the time of their application.

All foster carers are subject to a comprehensive assessment process that is recorded on a "Form F" document. The agency specifically contracts Form F assessments out to its own pool of Form F assessors, made up of qualified social workers with relevant experience. The Form F's sampled by the inspector were comprehensive and addressed the potential foster carers aptitude, qualities and competences in relation to foster care.

The agency operates a system whereby social workers each cover a geographical area. Foster carers are advised who their link social worker is and are given contact details including telephone numbers. Social workers and foster carers advised the Inspector that generally social workers initiate phone contact with carers once per week and visit once per month. Social workers case recordings supported this. Should the foster carer or social worker have any concern or issue to discuss then the frequency of this contact can increase. Foster carers commented that they found social workers to be accessible, supportive and informative. Case recordings also evidenced that social workers undertake periodic unannounced calls to foster carer homes.

All of the foster care records examined by the Inspector were found to include a foster care agreement that complies with the requirements of schedule 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. A copy of the agency's complaints procedure is contained within the foster carers handbook. A recommendation of the previous inspection to develop a simplified summary that outlines the allegation and investigation process remains outstanding. Records regarding allegations of abuse are maintained by the agency and regularly monitored. The Inspector viewed the agency's complaints policy and noted that this does

not contain contact details for the Commission for Social Care Inspection, although this information is contained elsewhere within the agencies policies and procedures.

The agency has a rostered out of hours duty service with an assistant social worker and a social work manager on call at all times. Foster carers stated that they found the system worked well and they were always able to access support when needed. The agency also funds membership for each foster carer to the Fostering Network and funds external training courses for foster carers. The agency provides an annual social day for everyone associated with the agency to come together. In addition foster carer support and training groups are held bi monthly. The training director advised that these groups aim to have an experiential learning component, peer support and advocacy on the rights of the child. The agency has also sponsored several of its male foster carers to attend a "Men in Foster Care" training day run by the Fostering Network.

The Responsible Individual confirmed that all foster carers complete the agencies core-training course prior to children being placed with them. This training includes the following areas:

- * The agencies policies and procedures
- * Safe and healthy caring
- * Confidentiality and managing change
- * Valuing diversity and promoting self-esteem
- * Managing challenging behaviour
- * Promoting contact and developing resilience

From sampling of foster carer records the Inspector evidenced that when two adults in one household are approved as joint carers both attend core and follow up training courses. From discussion with foster carers and link social workers the Inspector evidenced that consideration is given to the support needs of the sons and daughters of foster carers. One social worker commented that during each home visit they make sure they "catch up" with the foster carers children to establish any needs they may have. The Inspector noted that where appropriate, the agency also provides respite care to enable foster carers to be able to spend time alone with their sons and daughters.

From foster carers files seen by the Inspector it was noted that not all had received an annual review. The Registered Manager acknowledged this and advised that a programme to complete this task was underway, and during observation of the panel meeting several reviews were presented. The agency has developed a policy regarding respite care for foster carers. The agency has obtained relevant insurance cover and the Inspector was shown the current certificates.

The Inspector met with the agencies Financial Director. The agency has developed and operates within a structure of financial controls and procedures. Regulations and guidelines imposed upon business are conformed to, including the payment of tax and national insurance. The agencies accounts are maintained and properly audited by a registered accountant.

Each child and each foster carer has his or her own private secure record maintained by the agency. Since the last inspection the agency has developed its database and recording systems. The children's records sampled by the Inspector were found to be standardised, easy to access and contribute towards an understanding of their life events. Databases made available to the Inspector included a placement register, a log of the nights spent away from placement, respite care and a schools register. During the inspection confidential records were noted to be stored securely at all times. There is a system for keeping records about allegations and complaints. Records of these are made on individual staff, carers and children's records – including details of the investigation, findings and action taken. Separate records are also kept which bring together data on allegations and complaints.

Discussion with foster carers and children evidenced that children are supported and encouraged to record significant life events and to maintain and keep photograph albums.

The agency does not currently have foster carers who are family or friends of the child placed with them.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

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

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

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

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	4
11	3

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

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection? Yes

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1.	FS9	12	The Registered Manager must notify the Commission for Social Care Inspection of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by the agency.	09/02/06
2.	FS15	20	The fostering agency must ensure personnel information is maintained in accordance with Schedule 1, Fostering Regulations 2002. This is a restated requirement.	01/09/06
3.	FS16	21	Supervision records must be consistently maintained. This is a restated requirement.	01/09/06
4.	FS21	29	Each foster carer must be subject to at least an annual review and the report of this made available to the panel.	01/10/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS7	<p>The agency should provide supplementary systems to support transracial placements.</p> <p>This is a restated recommendation.</p>
2.	FS11	<p>Consideration should be given to an additional forum where young people can actively raise concerns.</p> <p>This is a restated recommendation.</p>
3.	FS14	<p>The Supporting Children and Young People towards independent to semi-independent living Policy should be further developed. It should include detailed written guidance to foster carers on what is expected of them in terms of preparing children and young people for independent or semi independent living.</p> <p>This is a restated recommendation.</p>
4.	FS15	<p>The agency should apply for its own enhanced level Criminal Records Bureau checks for all employees and foster carers.</p> <p>Criminal Records Bureau checks should be renewed after three years.</p>
5.	FS22	<p>The agency should produce a clear simple summary that outlines the investigation of allegations process.</p> <p>This is a restated recommendation.</p>

Commission for Social Care Inspection

East London Area Office

Gredley House

1-11 Broadway

Stratford

London

E15 4BQ

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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