



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

Islington Fostering Service - Children and Families

Highbury House
292 Essex Rd
Islington
London
N1

10th January 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

Islington Fostering Service - Children and Families

Address

292 Essex Road, Islington, London N1

Local Authority Manager

Ms Susanna Daus

Tel No:

0207 527 4298

Address

292 Essex Road, Islington, London N1

Fax No:

Email Address

paul.curran@islington.gov.uk

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

12/1/04

Date of Inspection Visit		10th January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Ms Jill Marriott	083058
Name of Inspector	2		
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		Stephen Hope – Principal Officer Norma Barnes – Deputy Team Manager, Fostering Rachael Underhill – Deputy Team Manager Fostering.	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

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Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

- 1. Statement of purpose**
- 2. Fitness to carry on or manage a fostering service**
- 3. Management of the fostering service**
- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
- 5. Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff and foster carers**
- 6. Records**
- 7. Fitness of premises**
- 8. Financial requirements**
- 9. Fostering panels**
- 10. Short-term breaks**
- 11. Family and friend carers**

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

Part D: Provider's Response

D.1. Provider's comments

D.2. Action Plan

D.3. Provider's agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

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

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Islington Fostering Service - Children and Families. 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.

Islington Fostering Service is a local authority service providing a range of care for children who are looked after. The fostering service is committed to providing quality placements for children and young people who are not able to remain with their birth families. There is a range of placements available including short-term foster care placements, permanent placements, kinship care and respite care.

Initially when a child is in need of a placement the social worker will look for a kinship placement within the wider family network. Where this is not possible a placement with an approved Islington Foster Carer will be considered.

It is the aim of the Local Authority to ensure all children are matched with appropriate carers who can meet their identified needs including cultural needs, ethnicity and religious needs. The fostering service aims to work in partnership with children, carers, families and other professionals to ensure that all children and young people looked after have a care plan, which is reviewed regularly and clearly sets out the future plans for the child.

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 of Islington fostering service took place over a three-week period starting on the 10/1/05. It found that all of the standards have been met or partially met. The overall service provided was good.

The service has not had a manager in post since April 2004. Evidence showed that the service has made developmental progress in spite of this. A new manager has been recruited and takes up her post on 31/1/05.

The Statement of Purpose for Islington Fostering Service was launched as part of the Foster Carers Handbook in November 2004. The document and the handbook have been developed to a high standard and is an excellent source of information for foster carers and relevant professionals.

The inspector would like to thank all carers, children, social workers and managers for their involvement in the inspection process.

The following methods were used to inspect Islington Fostering Service.

1. Planning the day and interview with managers. 10/1/05
2. Tracking service records. 10/1/05
3. Interview with carers. 17/1/05, 18/1/05, 19/1/05, 20/1/05.
4. Interviews with children and young people 17/1/05, 18/1/05, 19/1/05, 20/1/05.
5. Observation of Foster Panel 27/1/05.
6. Tracking personnel files 27/1/05
7. Tracking files 20/1/05.
8. Attended Social Work team meeting 12/1/05
9. Attended Foster Carers Group 21/1/05

Statement of Purpose. Standard 1.

Standard 1 remains partially met.

The Islington Fostering Service has a statement of purpose, which has been completed and clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the service. The children's guide to the service is still in draft format and will be launched in April 2005 with the children's handbook.

Fitness to Carry on or Manage a Fostering Service.

Standards 2-3.

Both standards were fully met

In spite of the fact that the service has not had a manager in post since April 2004 the service manager and the deputy managers have worked together to ensure the efficient management of the service. A new manager has been recruited and takes up post on

31/1/05.

Management of the Fostering Service.

Standards 4-5

Both standards were fully met.

The overall management of the service was good. Evidence was seen during the inspection, of good communication and clear roles for the managers and staff. The service has adequate financial procedures in place, which are monitored regularly. Regulation 43 notifications are provided to the appropriate agencies and complaints are recorded with actions and outcomes and dealt with within the given timescales.

Securing and Promoting Welfare.

Standards 6-14

Of the 9 standards 7 were met and 2 remain partially met.

The service provides good carers who offer good quality care for children placed. Child protection policies and procedures are available to staff and carers and the carers handbook contains all relevant information regarding the fostering process.

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

Standards 15-23

2 of the 9 standards were partially met 7 standards were fully met.

The support to staff and carers has improved. Training for carers has been reviewed a training programme is available. Carer's reviews are up to date. It is evident from the inspection findings that there has been further improvement in the development of services since the last inspection. Requirements relate to visits to carers.

Records

Standards 24-25

1 standard was fully met. One standard was partially met.

Not all carers and children file were complete. General and administration records were kept up to date information was available to the inspector. The files seen had completed Looked after Children's forms recorded. All files were kept securely in locked filing cabinets.

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

Standard 26

Standard met.

The premises are fit for use by the fostering service, although the space available is becoming overcrowded. The staff team has increased since the last inspection and will be increased again during the coming year. It is difficult to imagine where staff would be placed in the fostering office given the restrictions on space.

Financial Requirements

Standards 27-29

Standards were fully met.

The finances are monitored regularly and remain within the spending limits for the service.

Fostering Panel

Standard 30

Standard met.

The foster panel has up to date policies, procedures and practices in place.

Short term Breaks.

Standard 31.

Standard met

The short-term breaks scheme is managed appropriately by the fostering service.

Family and Friends as Carers.

Standard 32

Standard partially met.

Islington has an effective kinship care scheme. From the files seen it was evident that not all kinship carers are receiving appropriate support from the fostering service. From discussion with the management team it was evident that this area is being addressed and more staff are being recruited to the team to work within the kinship care service.

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:

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

For Islington Local Authority to address the requirements made in this report.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

NO

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	
			See standards from this inspection.	

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	Jill Marriott	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Hannah Hanley	Signature	_____
Date	31 st March 2005		_____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

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

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	Reg 3	FS1	The Registered Person will ensure the Children's Guide to the service is completed and made available to all young people by the identified date. This is a repeat requirement.	30/4/05
2	Reg 11(a)	FS9	The Registered Person must ensure that a policy and procedure regarding bullying is produced and made available to staff, carers and young people.	30/4/05
3	Reg 11(b) (i)	FS11	The Registered Person must ensure that decisions made at childcare reviews are acted upon. Young people must be kept informed about the progress of the decisions made at statutory reviews.	30/4/05
4	Reg 35 (3)(b)	FS21	The Registered Person must ensure that all visit that all reports of visits made to children by supervising social workers are clearly written and include relevant information.	30/4/05
5	Reg 35	FS22	The Registered Person must ensure that all carers are visited by their supervising social workers within the identified time scales.	30/4/05

6	Reg 30 (1)	FS24	The Registered Person must ensure that information contained in files is kept up to date. The Registered Person must ensure that one unannounced visit to each carer takes place each year.	30/4/05
7	Reg 23(1)	FS26	The Registered Person must ensure that there will be adequate space available in the team room for all staff when the team is expanded.	30/4/06
8	Reg 38(2)	FS32	The Registered Person must ensure appropriate support is offered to kinship carers and appropriate records are kept of placements.	30/4/05

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

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	5
Survey of placing authorities	NA
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	YES
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	YES
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	10/1/05
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	44

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?

2

The Statement of Purpose for Islington Fostering Service was formally launched as part of the Foster Carers Handbook in November 2004. The Statement of Purpose clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the service. The document is available to all Islington carers and all of the fostering team Social Workers. The document is also included in information given to new members of staff.

The children's guide to the service is not yet complete, The inspector was told that the children's guide will be available to all children and young people in the children's handbook which is at present being developed and will be launched as part of the children's handbook in April 2005.

The Registered Person will ensure the Children's Guide to the service is completed and made available to all young people by the identified date.

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 service has not had a team manager for approximately nine months. The team's two deputy managers and the service manager have worked together to ensure the service has been efficient and effectively run during this time. A manager has now been recruited and comes into post on the 31/1/05.

All members of the existing management team have the relevant qualifications and experience to manage the service.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The local authority recruitment procedure is used to ensure all members of staff are recruited appropriately. The managers of the service all have appropriate qualifications, Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and two references, which are checked by telephone with the referee. Personnel records were checked during the inspection. All staff records seen were up to date and in good order.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The roles and responsibilities of the manager, staff and carers are clearly defined in job descriptions and person specifications. Staff and carers are aware of their line of accountability and who to contact for support and information.

The manager has full responsibility for the day-to-day management of the service budget. The overall responsibility for the budget is still held by the finance department of Islington Social Services. The budget is monitored and reviewed regularly

Carers interviewed by the inspector were aware of the breakdown of the allowances they received. Carers also understood their responsibility to declare any conflict of interest, which may arise during their fostering career. Regulation 43 notifications are made available to the relevant authorities including the Social Care Commission.

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

5

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

X

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

X

Serious illness or accident of a child.

X

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

X

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

X

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

X

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

X

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

X

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**

All posts in the fostering team have clear job descriptions setting out their roles and responsibilities these were seen by the inspector. The level of work delegation and lines of accountability are discussed in supervision sessions and team meetings and are clearly defined. The service has not had a team manager in post since April 2004 throughout this period the staff team have been kept informed of the situation and to whom they are accountable. Members of the staff team explained to the inspector the reporting procedures used in the absence of a manager on site. These were seen as appropriate.

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

Records showed that Foster Carers go through a recruitment, induction and assessment process before becoming approved foster carers for Islington. Assessments include inspection of carer's homes, Criminal Records Bureau disclosures on all relevant adults, written references followed up by visits to referees.

The fostering service has introduced a 24-hour help line to support carers outside of office hours.

There is also a monthly carers support group with crèche facilities available.

All carers receive a Foster Carers Handbook on approval. The handbook includes all relevant information regarding the role of a carer.

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

Islington Fostering Service has an equal opportunities policy, which was seen as appropriate by the inspector. Training programmes available included identity work with children in placement and understanding equality.

Children referred to the service are matched as closely as possible with carers who are from the same background. Where this is not possible a child is placed with a view to finding a more appropriate placement within six weeks.

All carers are expected to ensure the religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs of the children placed with them are met. It was evident from discussion with staff and carers and from reading files that more information, support and training is available to carers in this area.

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
<p>The Fostering Service makes every effort to ensure each child's needs are fully met in the placement.</p> <p>The inspector was told that when matching children the care-plan, assessments of the child and the carer and information from relevant professionals is used to inform the placement decision.</p> <p>Carers who spoke with the inspector felt they are well supported by their supervising social worker to care for children and young people placed.</p>		

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?	2
<p>The fostering service has an appropriate child protection policy and procedure, which is linked to the London wide procedures. Carers receive appropriate information regarding child protection and safe care in the carer's handbook. Appropriate training is also available with regard to safe care as part of the induction process. Ongoing training includes information about what to do if a child makes an allegation, caring for children with special needs, life story work and child protection. Children are seen by the supervising social worker at least two monthly. Children who spoke to the inspector felt that they are encouraged to attend and participate in they're Looked after Children reviews.</p> <p>The fostering service does not yet have an anti bullying policy or procedure in place. The inspector was told a procedure will be developed and included in the children's handbook.</p> <p>The Registered Person must ensure that a policy and procedure regarding bullying is produced and made available to staff, carers and young people.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	100	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

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

Family contact is discussed and agreed at each child's placement meeting. Where appropriate carers are offered support to ensure the contact is a good experience for the child. Contact is regularly discussed between the carer and supervising social worker and also at Looked after Children's reviews. It is recognised that some contact is very difficult to support. Training regarding managing contact has been developed and has been made available to carers.

It was evident from information given to the inspector that one young person had been waiting since their review five months previously for a decision regarding contact to be made. No information had been fed back to the young person.

This information was passed to the relevant deputy manager.

See Standard 11

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

It was evident from discussion with carers and children and from the files seen that children and young people are consulted and have the opportunity to make their views known during the statutory childcare review process and at meetings with link workers.

Children are also aware that they can contact their social workers for support.

Children spoken to during the inspection said they did have the opportunity to make choices and let their views be known.

One child told the inspector that they were concerned that decisions made at a review five months earlier had not been addressed despite the decision being a very important one.

This information was fed back to the deputy manager for action.

See Standard 10

The Registered Person must ensure that decisions made at childcare reviews are acted upon. Young people must be kept information about the progress of the decisions made at statutory reviews.

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Information regarding children's health needs is included in the Foster Carers Handbook and the Looked after Children's Manual.
 Islington Social Services and Islington Primary Care Trust have recently launched a joint strategy to improve the health of looked after children.
 Registration with a GP is discussed in the initial placement meeting and is addressed as a priority.
 Link social workers monthly contact reports have been amended to include information regarding the health of young people. All carers have been supplied with emergency first aid kits and attend first aid training.

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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All foster carers are expected to attend a two-day mandatory training course for Promoting Children's Education. The fostering service maintains good links with the REACH Team who work specifically on the promotion of education of Looked after Children and provide a service to children not in school. All children placed with carers receive a computer to assist them with their schoolwork.
 The fostering service is working in partnership with education to ensure children meet a range of education targets by 2006.
 Information regarding the education targets can be found in the foster carers Handbook. Children's files seen included information regarding Personal Education Plans.

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
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Carers are aware of their responsibility to ensure young people placed with them are assisted to develop skills to prepare them for independent living. Carers have received training regarding positive moves for young people and are supported by their supervising social workers to implement an age appropriate independent living programme for the children placed. Information seen by the inspector showed that positive links have been made with the Leaving Care Team who support young people who are 16+ through the transition to independent living process.
 It was evident from discussion with carers, children and supervising social worker that independence training for children of all ages is promoted during every day living in the placement.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Staff are appropriately recruited through the Islington recruitment procedure. The inspector saw 4 staff files, each file included all the relevant information regarding the recruitment procedure.

Staff files were inspected at the Human Resources Department. Information was clearly filed and kept securely in a locked filing room.

Seven members of staff are agency workers (five social workers, one deputy manager, one administrator)

There was evidence seen by the inspector of regular attempts to recruit permanent members of staff to the vacant posts.

Total number of staff of the agency:

20

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

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Islington Fostering Service has a clear management structure. All members of staff are appropriately qualified for the posts they hold. Evidence showed that workloads are monitored through the supervision process. Case supervision notes are kept on the carer's files. From records seen it was clear that staff have regular supervision. Training needs are identified through the supervision and appraisal process.

The service has adequate administrative back up and IT equipment available for staff to carry out their work effectively. The staff team have employment contracts and conditions of service, which are held on their personnel files. There was evidence of some communication between the carer's link workers and the child's social workers on two of the four files seen. From the group discussion with staff it was evident that they were aware of the policies and procedures for the service including grievance and disciplinary procedures.

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
<p>It was evident from supervision files and records seen that the permanent staff team have appropriate skills, qualifications and experience to support the carers and children placed. There are five vacant social work posts in the team at present these posts are filled by agency staff who are recruited from a specific agency used by the local authority all agency staff have relevant references and CRB disclosures</p> <p>Carers are recruited from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds to meet the needs of the children referred. Recruitment of carers involves an in-depth assessment and includes references and a criminal records bureau disclosure. The four files seen showed that carers homes are safety checked before approval to foster is finalised and then on a yearly basis.</p>		

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
<p>Islington is a large local authority governed by legislation. The fostering service has a performance monitoring system to ensure services provided are effective and efficient. Carer's files seen during the inspection showed regular supervision had taken place. Staff files also showed evidence of regular supervision. The inspector was shown a whistle blowing procedure, health and safety policies and adequate professional indemnity insurance for staff and carer's. Carers told the inspector that the 24-hour telephone helpline service available was excellent.</p>		

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
<p>All members of staff in the fostering team are qualified social workers. Once staff are in post they receive induction training and ongoing training, which is identified through the supervision and appraisal system to enhance their skills.</p> <p>All members of staff attend staff meetings where information regarding professional and legal developments and new policy and procedure are discussed.</p> <p>Members of staff told the inspector that they report back to the staff meeting any training they have attended.</p>		

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

Members of the team told the inspector that they all attended regular supervision and team meetings. It was evident from discussion and from records seen that staff are aware of their job descriptions and clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

The service has implemented a staff appraisal system, which was seen by the inspector.

The supervision and appraisal system is used to identify the training needs of individual staff members.

The appraisal system informs the yearly training plan.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)**The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

Each mainstream foster carer has a supervising social worker that visits on a monthly basis. Visiting times are reduced to three monthly intervals for permanent or kinship cares. Carers are also contacted by phone monthly.

Foster carers who met with the inspector were very positive about the support they received they said they were provided with up to date information about policy and procedure children's right and any areas of organisational change.

Carers told the inspector that the phone system was a problem and it was difficult to contact the office at certain times during the day. The deputy managers are working to resolve this issue.

The fostering service has developed a report format for visiting carers. The format is useful and informative when used properly.

It was evident from file tracking that the use of the words "see last report" are used regularly when reporting home visits this is not good practice. On one file the reports were tracked back to the front of the file where the first report also said, "see last report".

It was very clear that a lot of development work has been done in the Islington Fostering Service, the carers handbook and the development of the carers support groups is evidence of this.

The Registered Person must ensure that all visit reports are clearly written and include relevant information.

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

From discussion with staff and carers and from tracking files it was evident that the fostering service is well managed and has good reviewing and monitoring systems. 2 mainstream carers told the inspector that they see their supervising social worker regularly each month. Carers also said they were impressed with the 24-hour support system, which appears to be very successful.

It is evident from the files seen and from discussion with social workers and carers that kinship care and permanent placements have not been as well supported by the fostering team. One file showed that the fostering team had not visited a permanency carer for two years and a kinship carer had not been visited since the child had been placed. In both cases the inspector was told that the children are visited regularly by their social worker and supervising social workers have now been allocated.

The Registered Person must ensure that all carers are visited by their supervising social workers within the identified time scales.

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

Foster carers are given the opportunity to attend a range of training courses to enhance their skills and abilities as a carer.

Core training courses are mandatory following approval. Newly approved carers are expected to attend initial induction training and a minimum of five courses each year for the first three years after approval. Foster carers are also expected to attend courses that have been identified as a training need as part of their review of approval.

On occasion staff and carers train together, which is useful in the development of partnership working and understanding the differing roles within the department. It was evident from discussion with carers and staff and from files seen that training needs are discussed during supervision visits.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

From the files seen it was evident that a lot of work has been done to improve the recording system in the fostering team.

The fostering service has developed a report format for use when supervising social workers visit, carers and children. The format is useful and informative when used properly. The inspector tracked four files and met with a number of carers and young people during the inspection. It was evident from file tracking that the use of the words "see last report" are used when writing reports of home visits this is not good practice. On one file the reports were tracked back to the front of the file where the first report also said, "see last report". Some of the information on file regarding young people wasn't filled in for example on one file the details of the GP were missing on another the child's age and ethnicity was missing. On one occasion it was clear that during case supervision areas to be addressed with the child and carer at the next home visit were identified. According to the home visit reports on the file the identified areas were never addressed. The inspector fed this information back to the Deputy Manager.

It was also evident from discussion and from files tracked that unannounced visits do not take place in every case on a yearly basis.

The Registered Person must ensure that information contained in files is kept up to date.

The Registered Person must ensure that one unannounced visit to each carer takes place each year.

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

The inspector visited the Human Resource Centre to check staff files, which were up to date and in good order.

Information regarding carers and children are kept securely in locked cabinets. All children's files are returned to the relevant social work department at the end of placement.

From discussion with carers it was evident that they are aware of the access to files policy and their right to see their files.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			113
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			X
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			X
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			X
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			X
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	240	Maximum £	370

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Since the last inspection the department has increased the number of staff in the fostering team and is expecting to make further increases. During this inspection the premises appeared more cramped and the inspector was told that it was sometimes difficult to get access to a computer. There is not always adequate workspace for each employee. It is difficult to imagine where any more staff would be placed.

The IT equipment is password protected and all records and files are securely stored in locked cabinets.

The premises are adequately insured under the council insurance policy.

The Registered Person must ensure that there will be adequate space available in the team room for all staff when the team is expanded.

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?

3

The social services finance section holds the main responsibility for the budget. The budget is reviewed on a quarterly basis. Problems with budgets are picked up and strategies are developed to cover overspends. The Local Authority ensures the service is financially viable at all times.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The finances of the fostering service are part of a wider financial plan held outside of the fostering service. The fostering budget was seen during the inspection and an appropriate financial monitoring system is in place.

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

Carers receive financial allowances and fees. A breakdown of the allowances is given to each carer. Fees and allowances include a reward element for carers. Carers told the inspector that they are aware of the breakdown of their allowances and are pleased that allowances are always paid on time.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Islington Fostering Panel has appropriate written policies and procedures. The inspector observed the panel during the inspection it was evident that policies and procedures are implemented in practice. Decisions are agreed at the panel and clearly written recommendations are available for the agency decision maker.

Panel members are not able to take up their position until references and Criminal Records Bureau disclosures have been satisfactorily completed.

The panel provides a number of functions including:

Approval, review and monitoring of foster carers

Approval of kinship carers

Termination of approval

Extension of placement

The panel also provides a quality assurance function in relation to the assessment process.

The chair of the panel produces a yearly report on the work of the panel. The report sets out the work undertaken and the aims for the year ahead. Members of the panel who spoke with the inspector were clearly aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The foster panel approves carers offering short-term breaks. All children receiving respite care are offered care in a planned way with carers who are introduced to the child prior to the placement being made. Children using the short breaks scheme remain the responsibility of their parents or main carers.	3
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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Islington has a policy related to family and friends as carers. All children placed with family or friends should be taken to panel within six weeks of the placement this does not always happen. It was evident from discussion with carers and supervising social workers that there is still work to be done in relation to kinship care. One file tracked showed evidence that the carer did not have a supervising social worker although it was evident from discussion that the child was visited regularly by their social worker. Information on files regarding the children placed in kinship care is limited.

Islington has produced a strategy for developing the fostering service and this strategy includes improvements in support to kinship carers.

The Registered Person must ensure appropriate support is offered to kinship carers and appropriate records are kept of placements.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 10th January 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

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

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

NO

Note:

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

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 25th March 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

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

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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

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