



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough of Brent Childrens Services Placement

Triangle House
328-330 High Road
Wembley
Middx
HA9 6AZ

22 & 24 March 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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

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

The role of CSCI is to:

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

Inspection Methods & Findings

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

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

YES

Name of Authority

London Borough of Brent Childrens Services Placement

Address

Triangle House, 328-330 High Road, Wembley, Middx,
HA9 6AZ

Local Authority Manager

Ms Jan Fishwick

Tel No:

020 8937 4558

Address

Triangle House, 328-330 High Road, Wembley, Middx,
HA9 6AZ

Fax No:

020 8937 4520

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

19/12/03

Date of Inspection Visit		22nd March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Bernard Burrell	098137
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		Jan Fishwick (Service Unit Manager) Janet Palmer (Asst. Director of Children Services)	

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Description of Fostering Service

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from last Inspection

Statutory Requirements from this Inspection

Good Practice Recommendations from this Inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods & Findings

(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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

Brent Children's Placements Services provides a range of fostering services for children looked after by the London Borough of Brent Social Services.

The Children's Placements Services is managed by a service unit manager and is divided into five teams: Intake and Referral, Post Adoption, Fostering Assessment, Adoption and Long Term Fostering.

Each team is managed by a manager and senior social workers. At the time of this inspection there were vacancies for senior social workers in the Intake & Referral and Intensive Fostering. There were also social worker vacancies in the Family Links and Post Adoption teams.

The Children's Placement Services also has a senior unit administrator, service unit administrative assistant, finance and administrative officer and a caretaker. An out of hours service is also offered in addition to the range of fostering and adoption services.

The teams operate from premises on the Wembley High Road close to other Brent council departments, including the Children Social Work team.

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 process was assisted with input from the managers and staff of the Children's Services Placements, the panel chair, foster carers, children and young people being looked after.

The findings indicated the fostering service is well established with clear procedural guidelines, structures and accountability from managers and staff. This appears to be helping ensure the delivery of quality and reliable service to looked after children and young people, despite the staffing and other shortfalls identified during this inspection.

The service currently has an estimated 100 plus foster carers and over 150 looked after children and young people. Corporate effort is now being made to recruit more carers from the local borough rather than outside. There is also a gradual reduction in the use of independent fostering agencies (IFAs).

The service has made progress finding more foster placements for young people 12 years and older plus development of the intensive fostering scheme. Effort is being made to help reduce the overall numbers of children and young people being looked after by working closer with the various education support and family services.

Although effort is been made to develop the kinship placement service, it is still in its infancy and currently inadequately staffed.

Progress has been made in the stability of placements with a reduction from 14 to 4 percent in the numbers of placements that have ended since the last inspection. Good effort has been made to carry out reviews of foster care placements, but a backlog still exists and the current Reviewing Officer will leave the service in May 2005. There are plans to employ a replacement officer.

A number of shortfalls were identified during this inspection. These are outlined in the statutory requirements and recommendations sections of this report. They included staffing shortfall across the different teams of the Children Services Placements and a shortfall in the number of carers recruited, particularly in the kinship service.

Closer monitoring is needed to help ensure all necessary checks and references are available for each foster carer. More effort is also needed to seek and record the views of all children, young people and foster carers plus ensure they help to formulate future development plans for the service.

More effort is also needed to help ensure foster carers, children/young people get to know each other better before placements are made, except in cases of emergency placements where time might not allow for this to be done.

The findings indicated good effort and work is being done to help meet the educational needs of looked after children and young people but shortfalls were identified in this area.

In addition, more effort is needed to help ensure take up of available training by foster carers becomes a priority to help enhance their skills and competencies and fulfil the stated objectives of the service.

Work is also needed to improve the management and auditing of case files and records. In addition, greater effort should be made to ensure the kinship and family placement service is fully developed, adequately staffed and carers fully supported.

Statement of Purpose

This standard was inspected and met the requirements of the National Minimum Standards (NMS). The provider should ensure a section about education and the role of the foster carer is written in the foster carer's handbook at the next review stage.

Fitness to Provide or manage a fostering service

The two standards were inspected. Standard 2 exceeded the NMS requirements and Standard 3 met the NMS. The service is managed professionally by teams of social workers, administrative staff and managers- all with sound background experience, knowledge and skills in children and family social care.

Management of the fostering service

Two standards were inspected. Standard 4 exceeded the NMS requirements and Standard 5 met the NMS. The inspection findings indicated the service has clear and well-understood business and development plans.

Securing and promoting welfare

Nine Standards were inspected. Standards 7, 9, 12 & 14 exceeded the NMS requirements. Standard 10 met the requirements of the NMS and the other standards had minor shortfalls. These related to the need for the placement services to ensure all required references/checks are fully completed, up to date and available for inspection. There is also the need to ensure closer attention is paid to matching placements, plus getting the views and opinions of all looked after children and young people.

Recruiting, checking, managing, supporting and training staff

All standards were inspected in this section. Standards 16 & 20 exceeded the NMS requirements. Standards 15, 18, 19, 21 & 22 met the requirements of the NMS.

The placements services will need to ensure adequate staffing of the different teams is achieved to help ensure more effective and responsive delivery of the aims and objectives.

More effort should also be made to support kinship carers plus development of the service. The placements services will also need to ensure more foster carers attend the range of training opportunities available to help enhance their skills and knowledge in fostering.

Records

Both standards were inspected. Standard 24 had minor shortfall relating to management of files and case records. This area will need comprehensive review to help improve the current status of how files and records are organised and stored.

Fitness of premises

This standard was inspected and continues to have a shortfall relating to the fitness of the premises to fully meet the needs of the services and staff.

Financial requirements

All three Standards were inspected and continue to meet the NMS requirements. For Standard 28, the Placements Services has recorded it now has an action plan and systems in place to recover long-standing over-payments and to prevent this practice from happening in the future.

Fostering panel

This standard was inspected and met the requirements of the NMS.

Short term breaks

This standard was inspected and had shortfalls relating to inadequate staffing and the need for the service to be fully developed to meet the needs that exist.

Family and friends as carers

This standard was inspected and had shortfalls relating to inadequate staffing, the need for more consistency in assessments and input from carers, development of specific training for kinship carers and review of policy and procedures governing kinship placements.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

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

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

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

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Regulatory Inspector	Bernard Burrell	Signature	_____
Second Inspector	_____	Signature	_____
Regulation Manager	Gail Freeman	Signature	_____
Date	13/07/2005		

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	12 and Sched 3.13	FS6	The provider must ensure that required statutory checks for all carers are fully up to date and available for inspection.	30/07/05
2	34 28 (3)	FS8	The provider must ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. The registered provider must ensure the recommendations of the fostering panel in relation to accommodation space in foster care homes is fully taken into account before any child/young person is placed	30/07/05
3	35 (3) (a) (b)	FS11	The provider must ensure more effort is made to get the views and opinions of all Looked After Children and young people about their foster care placements and the foster care services.	30/07/05

4	16	FS13	<p>The provider must ensure:</p> <p>More activities are available to occupy children and young people that are not in full time education.</p> <p>Direct support is offered to children and young people about drug and substance issues.</p> <p>Better effort is made to improve the educational performance of Looked After Children and Young people-particularly boys from African-Caribbean backgrounds.</p> <p>More systematic assessment and monitoring of the support given by foster carers to children and young people in their care.</p> <p>The corporate planning for the educational needs of looked after children and young people fully considers the staffing and other support needed by the LAC education team.</p> <p>More effort must be made to work more closely with the Children Social Work team to help meet the educational needs of children and young people, plus ensure issues such as Personal Educational Plans (PEPS) are completed on time.</p>	30/07/05
5	21	FS17	<p>The provider must ensure the staffing shortfall identified in the various Placements Teams is addressed to help ensure the service is able to fully meet the needs of foster carers, children and young people.</p>	30/07/05
6	17	FS23	<p>The provider must ensure that all foster carers demonstrate commitment to the range of skills training available to help enhance their professionalism as carers.</p>	30/07/05
7	30	FS24	<p>The provider must ensure a comprehensive auditing and review is carried out of case files and records to help improve the current management.</p>	30/07/05

8	33,34	FS8	<p>The provider must ensure more effort is made to ensure all children and young people are placed with foster carers who are capable of meeting their assessed needs.</p> <p>The provider must also ensure that children and young people spend more time getting to know their potential foster carers before the placements are agreed.</p>	30/07/05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

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

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS26	The provider should consider putting forward realistic plans for improvement of the fostering services premises, plus ensuring a better working environment for staff.
2	FS32	<p>The provider should ensure the development of the kinship placement service is accelerated to help ensure more effectiveness in responding to the needs that exist.</p> <p>The provider should also give full consideration to the view that a Kinship care team should be developed.</p>
3	FS1	The provider should consider including a section in the Carers' Handbook about carer's responsibility to support children and young people education needs.
4	FS30	The provider should consider undertaking efforts to recruit more males as potential panel members.

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

PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

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

Number of Inspector days spent	3
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	YES
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	YES
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	NO
• 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	NO
Date of Inspection	22/03/05
Time of Inspection	9AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	23

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

The scale ranges from:

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

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

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

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

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and updated. The inspector was satisfied it contained the required information about the services provided by the fostering service.

Each staff is given a copy of the Statement of Purpose and the document is also discussed at team meetings.

The children guides to the services are written in age appropriate language and contained relevant information about the foster care, advice and support services. The foster carers' handbook contained a comprehensive guide to the services provided plus references and explanation about the core National Minimum Standards (NMS).

The guide also contained a section for carers to make comments.

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?	
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The inspection findings indicated the service is managed by a team of managers and senior workers, who are individually skilled, appropriately trained and well experienced in children and family social work.

The management structure of the service is stable. This has helped to provide focus and direction in the teams. The inspection findings indicated there is a culture of professionalism and dedication within each team. Staff interviewed by the inspector reported satisfaction with the current management structure and support being offered.

Information provided to the inspector indicated managers meet with the management accountant monthly to review budgets.

The inspector was satisfied the managers are working to ensure satisfactory delivery and achievements of the aims and objectives of 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.

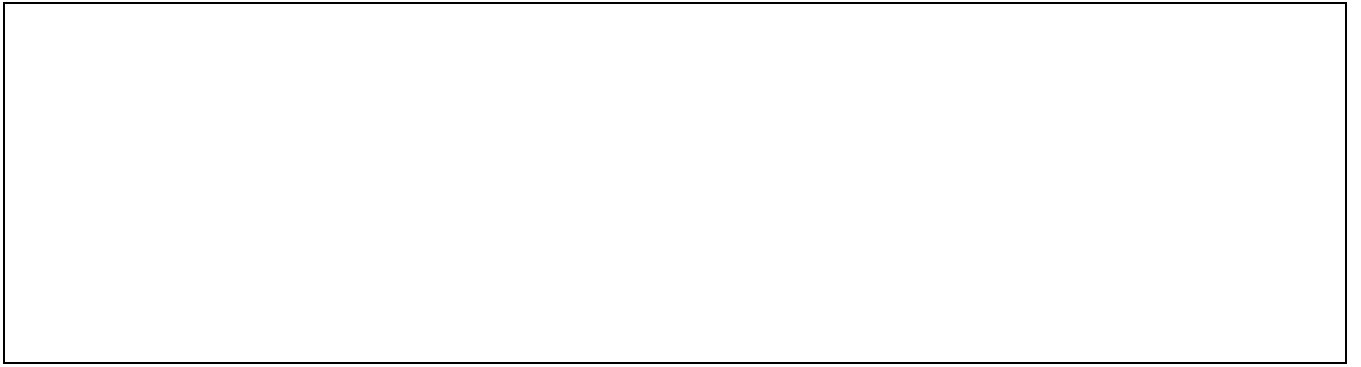
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	
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The inspection findings indicated the service is managed by a team of managers, social workers, administrators and support staff with varied and strong professional background, skill and experience in various areas of children and family social care.

The evidence seen and received by the inspector indicated each staff underwent appropriate recruitment process and induction to the service. Satisfactory references, CRB and other relevant checks have been carried out.

The findings indicated each manager has sound understanding and knowledge of the operational structure and vision of the service. The evidence also indicated appropriate measures are in place to help safeguard and promote the welfare of the Looked After Children (LAC).

The recorded evidence examined on case files indicated careful monitoring, supervision, reviews, input of clinical professionals, panel assessments and support to carers are among the measures used to help ensure the safety and welfare of children and young people.



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?

4

The inspection findings indicated the fostering service is adequately managed with appropriate business and development plans with clear and realistic objectives.

The inspector was satisfied the service has clear management and organisational structure that is made known to all stakeholders. The inspector's observation of staff at work indicated a strong professional culture and good work ethics.

The service has clear procedures for monitoring and reviewing its operations. Examples were given to the inspector that showed development changes that have taken place to improve the service, including supervision of staff, monitoring visits to foster care homes and regular management meetings and reviews of the service.

There were clear procedures governing the recruitment and support of staff, foster carers and other stakeholders. There were good examples recorded in case files verifying the reviews that have taken place and action plans to address shortfalls or concerns of children, foster carers and other stakeholders.

The inspector was also shown examples of how quality assurance is carried out, including seeking the views of children, young people and carers to help improve the quality and output of the service.

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

X

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

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:

X

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

X

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The findings indicated the service is managed professionally and efficiently with clear procedures for daily management of the service. The social workers and other support staff had clear job descriptions and the inspector was satisfied roles and responsibilities are fully understood.

There was appropriate management cover and plans to help ensure the service functions according to procedures. The managers are well supported with good communication across the different sections of the placement services. Staff who spoke to the inspector reported satisfaction with the support and guidance they receive from senior managers.

The inspector was given information about the models of staff supervision and structure within the service. These appeared to be working well and staff reported they received good support staff from managers and senior workers.

The current reviewing officer who has been with the service since November 2003 will be leaving in May 2005. Examination of review work completed showed evidence of good progress made in this area of the service. There is plan to recruit a replacement review officer.

The reports received from foster carers indicated satisfaction with the operational management and efficiency of the service.

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?

2

The inspector was given information about the process involved in recruiting and selecting foster carers. The procedures included a Safe Care Profile and a health and safety checklist completed by the supervising social workers about each foster carer's home situation.

However, this information was missing from a few of the carers' files.

As part of the initial assessment process, each prospective fostering household is required to complete a 'family policy' that seeks to identify potential risks and strategies for minimising those risks.

The findings also indicated foster carers are asked to sign an undertaking not to administer corporal punishment to children and young people in their care. The guidelines also provide information about how allegations or complaints should be dealt with by foster carers.

Foster carers are given diaries to be used for recording significant incidents or events within the placements that might involve issues of safe caring.

The service undertakes to ensure that CRB and other statutory checks are completed on all adults in carer's homes who have significant contact with children and young people. The service also conducts periodic reviews where issues relating to health and safety, safer caring strategies and statutory checks are discussed and examined.

However, in a few of the review meetings completed, the reviewing officer made recommendation for certain 'statutory checks to be completed as soon as possible.'

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?

4

Brent Council has a Race Equality policy that covers all areas of diversity and how it intends to promote equality in its services, including the fostering service.

The findings indicated foster carers are made aware of this policy and how the procedures should work in practice. Copies are also given to each foster carer and other stakeholders. The foster carers' handbook has a section that makes reference to culture, values, beliefs and religion.

The current foster carers are made up of people representative of the multi-ethnic diversity of the Looked After Children and young people, including children with disabilities.

The evidence provided also indicated good effort is been made by the fostering service to recruit foster carers from a diversified background. Advertising is placed in various ethnic, community, regional and national media outlets to help achieve this objective.

The evidence and reports received from foster carers also indicated training in diversity issues is provided, including caring for children and young people who are disabled.

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?

2

The inspection findings indicated good effort is made by the placement service to ensure right matching of Looked After Children/young people and foster carers is achieved.

The service now has a matching policy plus mention is made about this area in the foster carer's handbook. Examination of placement recordings, Form F assessment documents and minutes of panel meetings, showed consideration is given to whether a placement can meet the assessed needs of children and young people placed.

In addition, a deregistration case was considered by the panel during this inspection process. The carer reportedly was no longer able to meet the 'emotional needs' of a child in her care. The carer was also reportedly uncertain whether she wanted to remain a carer or take a break.

The service also recruits carers from a diversified background that reflect the diversity of needs and backgrounds of the children/Young people looked after.

Responses from foster carers indicated they would like to see a longer process of foster carers and children getting to know each other before a placement is made, except in emergency placements. The issue of closer attention to placement matching was also highlighted in the reviewing officer's reports and by the panel.

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?**

4

There is a comprehensive policy and procedural guidelines on child abuse. These are made know to all foster carers and stakeholders. The effectiveness of this policy is monitored by the supervising social workers and reviewing officer through the review processes, home visits, plus advice and information to carers and looked after children and young people.

Foster carers also have an agreement to notify the service without delay of any serious illness or matters affecting a child/young person in placement.

The process used to recruit staff and foster carers is also used to ensure the protection of looked after children/young people. Carers are also offered training in safe caring plus how to manage difficult behaviour and situations. In addition, staff are offered induction training in child protection issues.

Looked after children and young people who completed the questionnaire survey confirmed they are aware of how and to whom complaint should be made if they have concerns.

The service also offers further advice and guidelines about how carers should deal with allegations of abuse or complaints. The documented evidence examined showed prompt actions have been taken by the service to investigate complaints and allegations in line with its procedural and best practice guidelines.

In addition, the service has an updated policy on Looked After Children/young people who go missing from foster carer's home. Clear guidance is also outlined in the foster carers' handbook. Foster carers also receive induction training and supervision support about the procedures they are expected to follow.

There are procedural guidelines on how carers should recognise, record and deal with bullying. A separate policy offers guidelines on discipline of Looked After Children and young people, plus a section in the Carer's handbook outline the policy relating to corporal punishment.

Foster carers confirmed in their responses to the survey questionnaire that the fostering service has made it clear to them what punishments are acceptable.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:

100

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The service provides each foster carer with a guidance in the foster carer's handbook about their role in helping to promote and assist children and young people to make contact with their families and friends- both inside and outside the foster homes.

The fostering service also provides support to foster carers on how to manage contacts in the best interest of the children and young people. The inspection findings indicated where issues of concerns about contact develop, foster carers have an obligation to inform the children/young person's social and supervising social workers.

The workings of the objectives in this standard are monitored by the fostering service through the annual foster carers reviews, home visits, training of placement staff and foster carers.

Responses from foster carers to the inspector confirmed they assist children and young people maintain and develop appropriate contacts and links with families and friends. Equally, responses from the children and young people also confirmed they received support in this area from foster carers.

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

The inspector was satisfied the service has a clear statement of intention of how it plans to work, listen and seek the views of Looked After Children, young people, their families and other stakeholders. The inspector saw good examples of this in several case review notes where the reviewing officer and supervising social workers recorded their discussions with the children, young people and families. However, a few cases had no evidence to verify this has been done.

The inspector saw an example of the questionnaire template that is meant to be used by supervising social workers to record the views and opinions of children/young people. However, there was insufficient evidence to verify these were always completed during visiting contacts with children/young people.

The foster carer's handbook stipulated that foster carers views must be sought and where this is not so, reasons must be given why the views of those caring for children and young people are not given precedence.

The responses from some children/young people who completed the survey questionnaires indicated that some foster carers seldom ask them for the views, opinions and ideas. There were some children and young people who were able to identify positive changes made at their placements because their views were considered. Equally, several children and young people did not identify any changes made in their foster placements because of their views/opinions.

Similarly, some children and young people felt satisfied the fostering service social workers asked their opinions about their foster placements and the fostering service. Others stated they were either asked about their placements or the service, but not both.

A panel member also stated more effort should be made to seek and record the views and opinions of all looked after children and young people with less emphasis placed on the views of social work staff.

The findings indicated the service will need to actively ensure the views and opinions of all children/young people are sought about their placements and the fostering service. The information received should be recorded on each case file where appropriate. This should help to ensure full compliance with the fostering service statement of purpose and the NMS requirement.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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The fostering service has an agreement with each carer to ensure that when children/young people are placed, they must attend their statutory medical checks. The report received from the agency indicated that children under 5 years old have medical examination twice annually. Children and young people over 5 years have their medical examination once each year.

The medical examination is planned with the support of each child's social worker and the child/young person has the right to refuse a medical examination. However, this is dependent on their age and ability to understand the process.

The fostering service provided information to the inspector indicating the health care status and needs of each young person is discussed at the placement agreement stage of the foster care. Each foster carer according to the fostering service, has an obligation to register the young person with a general practitioner, dentist and optician. The obligation also places the responsibility on the carer to ensure medical appointments for the children and young people are kept.

The recorded information on case files indicated appropriate monitoring has been taking place by the review officer, supervising social workers, LAC reviews and annual foster carers' reviews. These help to identify issues of concerns.

The inspector observed a panel meeting at which a paediatrician was part of the membership. She was proactive with her input, advice and suggestions.

The fostering service provided information to the inspector indicating the Children Act Development Manager (part of the Primary Care Trust –PCT) is assisting in the development of the Teenage Pregnancy strategy and preventative agenda

The responses from children and young people and young people to the survey

questionnaires about 'staying healthy,' indicated some young people do physical exercise education at least once weekly. Others reported they received help to control their nutritional an dietary intake. Some also reported they are independent in looking after their health care needs and know what to do if something was wrong.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The findings of the inspection indicated the fostering service is actively working in partnership with other agencies and professionals to try and meet the educational needs of children and young people.

The educational objectives and educational developmental plans are outlined in its policy documents. The foster care assessment process also involved the input of professionals such as educational psychologists where necessary.

The information provided to the inspector indicated that foster care training relating to the educational achievement of children and young people took place in July 2004 and included representatives from the educational psychologist service, the LAC education team, children field social work and family placements. The plan is to have this training annually.

The inspector was also satisfied with the evidence that showed specialised home tuition support is offered for children and young people excluded from schools. This support is offered with the input of the Brent Education Tuition Service and the Brent Education Exclusions Team. Additional information provided to the inspector indicated there is also the provision of specialised staff training by the LAC education team. This involves monthly seminars for new workers about education in the UK.

An education session is also reportedly provided to social workers during their induction training. The provision of IT equipment to help support the learning and development within foster care settings is also given to children, young people and foster carers.

The information received from the fostering service stated that 3 children/young people have been excluded from schools and are receiving individual tuition, one was about to be re-integrated into a secondary school and the other will be permanently excluded. The different agencies have been reportedly working to provide the child who is permanently excluded with appropriate alternative educational support.

The responses received by the inspector from the LAC education team indicated there is good consultation among the stakeholders about working towards meeting the educational needs of children and young people. Projects such as the Booster Classes have been operating for about five years and have generated measurable results and achievements. Additional focus is also been directed to supporting children and young people who are studying for their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and preparation for

university.

Transport is also provided to get children and young people to and from special education classes. In addition., financial incentive is provided to encourage some young people to stay on at school and complete their educational pursuits.

The shortfalls identified in this standard related to views of some children and young people, LAC education team, comments made by foster carers in their responses to the questionnaire survey and observation made by the inspector.

The fostering service will need to ensure more activities are available to occupy children that are not in full time education. In addition, more support should be offered to foster carers who have children/young people who are currently not fully engaged during school hours.

The fostering service will need to ensure more direct support and education is offered to children/young people about drugs and substance issues. This should be in addition to published information already available about drug and substance misuse.

The fostering service will need to make better effort in reversing the current poor educational underperformance of Looked After African-Caribbean male children and young people.

The fostering service will need to ensure each child is fully supported by all foster carers to achieve full potential in their scholastic and educational work. More effort should be made to get evidence demonstrating what differences the efforts of foster carers have made to meeting the educational needs of children/young people.

The fostering service will need to ensure that corporate planning for the educational needs of children/young people, fully considers the staffing support that is needed by the LAC education team.

The fostering service will need to work and communicate more effectively with children and young people social workers and help ensure matters such as Personal Educational Plans (PEPS) are completed for all looked after children and young people where necessary.

Interview with a key staff in the fostering service indicated more work is needed to promote training of foster carers and social workers about the educational system, PEPs and manage the exclusions of children/young people more effectively.

The fostering service will need to ensure the role of foster carers in helping to meet the educational needs of children/young people is mentioned in the foster carer's handbook- particularly in 'The Role of the Foster Carer' section.

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?

4

The information provided to the inspector indicated the fostering service supports foster carers in several concrete ways to help develop the skills, competence and knowledge of young people as they prepare to move into adult living.

According to the fostering service, carers are expected to promote independent living skills within their homes. The compliance of this requirement is monitored by the supervising and Children In Need social workers and also discussed at LAC and foster carer's reviews. Support and advice is also offered to foster carers where necessary.

In addition, the Leaving Care Team helps to coordinate plans and objectives for young people approaching their 16th birthday. This scheme, known as the pathway plan to independence. It is subject to statutory reviews and changes are made where necessary.

Foster carers are also encouraged to work in partnership with young people and their social workers to help prepare for the transition to independent living.

The LAC education Team also confirmed to the inspector they work closely with each young person in the year 11 and 12 transition programme. This aims to ensure appropriate careers advice, support and planning is offered in education, training or employment.

Provision is also made to support young people who wish to remain in foster carers' home beyond their 18th birthday. The initiative known as 'My Place Scheme' involve a reduced allowance paid to foster carers that reflects the change nature of the needs and tasks in the placements.

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

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspection findings indicated all staff and managers working in and for the fostering service are suitably qualified with sound experience and skill in children and family social work.

Recruitment of staff is carried out in line with the Brent Council's equal opportunity and employment procedures. All staff have undertaken necessary pre-employment statutory checks and references. Procedures are also in place to ensure social work staff keep their professional accreditation updated, including updating of their CRB checks.

All staff receive appropriate induction, supervision, on going training and professional development.

Total number of staff of the agency:

36

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

8

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?

4

The findings indicated the Children's Services Placement is appropriately organised and managed by a team of managers, senior workers, social workers, administrative staff and other professionals.

The inspector interviewed a sample of staff from three of the five teams. Their responses indicated they felt supported satisfactorily in the performance of their roles and responsibilities. The inspector also interviewed two of the managers and a senior staff and was satisfied with the examples they gave outlining the ways in which they work to support staff plus ensure they are able to deliver an efficient and reliable service.

Supervision and appraisals are adequately planned and carried out in line with employment agreement and corporate procedures. There were also adequate training and development programmes in place to help staff enhance their professionalism.

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?****2**

The information provided to the inspector indicated staff currently working in the service are suitably qualified with appropriate experience in children and family social care. Staff have a range of roles and responsibilities with the central task of providing a supportive and reliable service to the Looked After Children and young people.

The inspection focused on the work of staff in the Intake and Referral, Fostering and Long Term Fostering Teams. The findings indicated the Intake and Referral and Fostering Assessment teams currently have several staff vacancies.

Some existing foster carers who completed the questionnaire survey felt more foster carers should be recruited and at least one carer with several years fostering experience, wanted to see the 'selection standards for new foster carers become more stringent.'

The inspection findings indicated the Family Link section of the fostering service needs urgent attention to address the staffing shortfall in order to adequately meet the demands that exist. The view expressed by staff was that more staff is needed to help manage the backlog of long- term placement cases and outstanding reviews.

The inspector was satisfied the management has recognised the need to recruit additional qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of the children and young people being looked after.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

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

The service has clear policy and guidelines about its recruitment and employment practices including how it plans to promote equality of opportunity and retention of staff. Staff are also required to be fully committed to the guidelines and principles in their interactions and work with foster carers, Looked After Children/young people and other stakeholders.

The inspector interviewed a selection of staff and was satisfied they are complying with these guidelines. Reports from carers, children and young people also indicated satisfaction with staff's competencies, professional practices and the support they offered.

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>The inspection findings indicated the service is committed to providing adequate and appropriate support to help enhance staff professionalism and skills.</p> <p>The supervision and appraisal programmes are used to help identify training and professional developmental needs of individual staff. The service also provides a range of training programmes, including the induction process for new staff.</p> <p>The staff interviewed by the inspector reported satisfaction with the range and quality of training available to them.</p>		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>As indicated elsewhere in this report, the inspector was fully satisfied that staff are adequately supported, there is good and consistent supervision programmes in place and appropriate training and professional development opportunities.</p> <p>Staff reported satisfaction with the support they receive from senior managers and each other.</p> <p>The inspector interviewed a sample of staff and was also fully satisfied they demonstrated commitment, good knowledge, skill and understanding about their roles and responsibilities to the service, foster carers and the needs of looked after children and young people.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>The service has clear written procedures on how it plans to support foster carers. These included support from the family placement workers, children's social workers and the annual review.</p> <p>Support is also offered through training, input from specialist professionals such as child psychologists and educational experts. The Emergency Duty Team and Placement staff offer out of hours support to foster carers. Carers receive support from each other and the local foster care groups.</p> <p>The service provides a range of information and updates to foster carers, including changes in the law, practice guidelines and opportunities available to carers and children and young people.</p> <p>Carers also receive support from the supervising social workers who carry out announced and unannounced home visits.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

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

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

As indicated above, the supervising social workers carry out regular announced and unannounced home visits to foster carers home as part of their statutory roles and responsibilities.

Recorded information examined by the inspector showed evidence of the support plus advice and information offered by the reviewing officer and other professionals connected with the service. The workers in the fostering service also support foster carers by telephone contacts.

The recorded information showed examples of areas identified by the reviewing officer and social workers where carers needed to enhance their skills and knowledge.

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?****2**

The inspector was provided with the foster carers training programme for 2004. The foster carers handbook also has a section on training that stipulates it's a requirement of all foster carers they attend training in line with the National Minimum Standards (NMS).

The stipulation also makes it clear that foster carers should demonstrate a commitment to training that would help to enhance their development and understanding of the fostering task.

Foster carers are also required to attend a number of essential training courses that they consider will assist them in caring for children looked after. The service also expects foster carers to attend a minimum of 3 training courses each year and will have completed the essential training courses within two years of their approval.

The evidence on care reviews completed showed that the issue of training has been identified as action plan for a number of foster carers. The inspector's findings indicated the majority of foster carers are proactive in accessing training opportunities offered by the service. Six foster carers have undertaken the NVQ training.

However, the findings indicated more effort is needed to ensure there is full commitment and compliance with the training requirements by all foster carers. More commitment is needed from the service to involve more carers in NVQ training opportunities plus attend essential training to help enhance their skills and abilities.

Specialised training is now been developed for kinship carers.

Some of the staff interviewed by the inspector reported they have offered training to foster carers in various areas, including managing finance but the service could benefit from having a dedicated training officer.

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
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The inspector examined a number of case files for both foster carers and looked after children and young people. The findings indicated most records were up to date with essential information maintained.

The service has an audit of file policy but the findings indicated work is needed to help achieve full implementation, better management of all files and a more systematic approach to filing. This should help to ensure easier access and inspection.

The service will also need to ensure outstanding documentations such as renewal of CRB checks as identified in case reviews, must be followed up with timescales when these should be submitted.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The inspection findings indicated the service's administrative records are updated and comply with the requirements of regulations. Evidence received from the service indicated separate records are kept for complaints in the placements and the complaints department. A separate record of allegations against carers is also kept at the front of each file.

In addition the following administrative records are available at the service- foster carer's register, financial database, carers' and children's files and supervision records.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			198
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			277
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			278
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			29
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			3
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	200	Maximum £	300

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

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

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspection findings indicated the service is operated from a two-store office building located on the main Wembley High Road. There is easy access to public transport services and other facilities.

The service has all the essential office equipment and facilities, including computer and other IT systems. Staff work in open-plan rooms. These were inadequate in size and cluttered in several areas. The report received from the service indicated hot desking is being considered to accommodate staff.

The main reception area was cluttered and the general condition of the building could benefit from upgrading. The management of the service has recognised this shortfall and there is plans to eventually move to more suitable premises.

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 information received indicated the fostering service is financially viable and is adequately supported financially by Brent Social Services.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The information received indicated the fostering service financial operation operates in line with clear procedures. Manager and staff are expected to know their financial responsibilities to the department and the accounts are appropriately audited annually.

The information received also indicated that managers within the agency are slowly recovering long-standing overpayments. Systems are now in place to prevent this practice from happening in the future.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspection findings indicated each foster carer receives weekly allowances that are reviewed annually. Each child/young person placed also receives a clothing allowance, two weeks holiday allowance, plus allowance for religious festivals and birthdays.

An additional payment is also made to carers who look after children/young people with disabilities.

Almost all the children and young people who responded to the questionnaire survey stated they were not satisfied with the amount of allowance they receive for clothing expenses.

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 inspector observed a panel meeting as part of this inspection process. The meeting was conducted by an independent chair, a councillor, panel adviser, a doctor who is the medical adviser to the panel, independent members and representative from the placement service.

The proceeding was conducted professionally and in line with the procedural guidelines of the local authority placement service. All matters were addressed through the chair and questions for the presenting social workers were assigned to individual panel members.

Minutes from the previous panel meeting were appropriately recorded and distributed in advance of the meeting. This gave members enough time to familiarise themselves with the cases and issues that were discussed and examined.

Each case was carefully examined, analysed and reviewed by the panel members before meeting with the presenting social workers. Questions were asked and clarifications sought about issues and concerns identified in each case presented. For example the limit on the number of children placed with a particular carer, adequacy of accommodation in some foster care homes and what has been done to address these issues.

One member of the panel asked for clarification about the difference between 'interim and full assessments' that come to the panel. She was concerned important information and documentation appeared to be missing from the cases presented. It was explained that with an interim assessment, certain documents would sometime still be outstanding unlike a full assessment where the expectation is that everything would be in place ready for the panel.

The range of questions asked by panel members, indicated the following areas would need closer attention by the fostering placement service. These included: the need for all important information and events to be declared by existing and prospective foster carers.

In addition, complex cases should be assigned to more experienced social workers in the children social work team. There is a need for better working partnership and communication across the children and family services teams and more support to kinship carers to help minimise the stress associated with caring and family tensions.

The case of a foster carer requesting termination of her role was presented to the panel for discussion. This case was adequately monitored and reviewed by the fostering team prior to the panel meeting. However, the consensus reached indicated the carer was unable to bond emotionally with the foster child, despite being a competent carer in other areas of her role.

The case highlighted the need for closer attention to be given to placement matching. One foster carer who responded to the questionnaire survey also stated the selection standards for new foster carers should be more stringent,' and perhaps more 'frequent assessments and getting to know new foster carers more thoroughly.'

A comment received also indicated there should be a longer process of foster children and carers getting to know and meet each other before placements are made, except in emergencies.

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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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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The information supplied to the inspector indicated short-term breaks are arranged for children where their parents remain the main carers. A specific scheme- Family Links- is reportedly being developed over the past 6 months for children with disabilities.	3
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Planning has taken place in partnership with the principal officer for children with disabilities. The objective is to supplement and enhance the service provided to these children by way of the local authority's two residential units.

At the time of this inspection there were vacancies for family links and intensive social workers in the fostering assessment team.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The inspection findings indicated kinship assessments are carried out in line with regulatory requirements and assessments for short-term and intensive foster carers plus short-term kinship placements are presented to the Brent Fostering Panel for approval. The assistant director of children services ratifies the decision made by the panel.

The adoption and permanency panel approves the assessments for long-term kinship placements and long-term foster placements.

The feedback from interview with staff indicated the work in kinship placements is very task centered. There is need for more consistency in assessment and input from carers during this process.

More staffing is needed to ensure this area of the fostering placement service becomes more effective and responsive to the increasing needs that exist.

Other additional comments received from staff included the need for development of specific training and take up by kinship carers. The view was also expressed to the inspector that a kinship care team should be developed to help respond to the needs that exist.

There is also need for a review of the policy and procedure governing kinship 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 22nd & 24th March 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note:

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

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

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

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

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 Ms Jan Fishwick of London Borough of Brent Children Services Placement 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 Ms Jan Fishwick of London Borough of Brent Children Services Placement 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.

Commission for Social Care Inspection
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

Telephone: 020 7979 2000
Fax: 020 7979 2111

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120
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