



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

London Borough of Enfield Fostering Service

**Social Services Department
Southgate Town Hall
Palmers Green
London
N13 4XD**

Lead Inspector
Mrs Angela Grier

Announced Inspection
14th November 2005 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	London Borough of Enfield Fostering Service
Address	Social Services Department Southgate Town Hall Palmers Green London N13 4XD
Telephone number	020 8379 2820
Fax number	020 8379 2699
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	London Borough of Enfield
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Janice Darling
Type of registration	Local Auth Fostering Service
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 25th October 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

The Enfield Fostering Service recruits, assesses, trains and supports a range of fostering placements and is designed to meet the diverse needs of children and young people who are Looked After by the authority.

The restructuring of the service, which was mentioned in the last inspection report, has now been completed. There is a separate recruitment and assessment team, a practice and support team, a kinship team and a permanency team. All teams are headed by a deputy manager.

The foster panel membership is under review following the retirement of various long serving members. At the time of the inspection 115 children had been placed by the fostering service.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection of the Enfield Fostering Service began on 14th November 2005 and was completed on the 28th November 2005. At the previous inspection five requirements were made and these have all been met. At this inspection three requirements and five recommendations have been made. The previous registered manager has since left the service.

The acting manager and all the staff of the fostering service cooperated fully with the inspection process. The pre inspection information was very well presented and included 20 Placing Officer's questionnaires, 23 Foster Carer questionnaires and 12 Children's questionnaires.

The three requirements made following this inspection relate to the number of agency/independent social workers who make up almost half the staff of the fostering service. The lack of training available to foster carers over the last year and the need to set up a system for the notification of child protection allegations involving foster carers.

The restructuring of the fostering service is now complete and recruitment taking place following the inspection will hopefully enable the teams to be staffed properly.

The inspector attended the foster care panel, the placement panel meeting and two team meetings. The inspector met four foster carers and their children as part of the case tracking and attended a foster carer support group. A highlight of the inspection was to attend the release of a video made in conjunction with the library and leisure services by young children who are being fostered. The inspector would like to thank all the staff, foster carers and their families and the members of the panel for their support during the inspection.

What the service does well:

The restructuring of the fostering service has been completed and staff are very clear about their responsibilities within each team. The new recruitment and assessment team has almost met the targets set and responses from foster carers about this process at Panel were very positive. Proper management systems are being developed to meet the needs of this growing service. Senior management clearly support staff and work with them to provide a good service to carers and the children they care for.

The chair of the panel changed last year and the new chair has made positive changes to the way the panel conducts their business. The first annual report from the new panel is expected in January 2006.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Management systems have improved since the last inspection. The information provided to foster carers from the children's social workers has now improved and is monitored by managers. The number of outstanding reviews of foster carers has improved and a new system is set up to diary the review dates ahead.

What they could do better:

The use of agency and independent staff represents almost half the total staff group. With the establishment of the new teams and clear roles for staff there should be permanent staff in place to maintain continuity for the service. The recruitment and retention policies for staff need to be reviewed and related to the similar policies and neighbouring boroughs. There has been a lack of formal training for foster carers over the last year. It is hoped that a new post in the training section, which has recently been filled, will enable a more active and planned programme for carers to be established this year.

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

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

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

12

The fostering service has good links with the health agencies within the local authority and this helps foster carers to secure appropriate health services for children.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service provides information regarding health and the development of children to foster carers through the regular foster carer support groups and through visits from the supervising social workers. Foster carers are provided with names and contact details to discuss any health problems with the health professionals. Foster carers are aware of the need to maintain accurate health records for the children they care for.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

3,6,8,9,15,30

Suitable management arrangements and appropriately qualified staff promote the welfare of children/young people. Foster carers are trained and supported to ensure they provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for children.

The recruitment procedures in place and the training provided to foster carers assist in protecting children from all forms of abuse.

EVIDENCE:

The London Borough of Enfield provides a fostering service that is managed by suitably qualified and experienced staff. The inspector saw the files for two agency members of staff who have worked for the fostering service for over two years and two files for staff who started working for the service this year. All four files contained the required information contained in Schedule 1 of the regulations. The inspector recommends that a front sheet containing emergency information [eg next of kin] be added to the agency and independent social worker files.

The visits by the inspector to the homes of four foster carers and to a foster carer support group confirmed that foster carers receive preparation training which includes health and safety issues.

The process of matching children to carers is performed by the Enfield Placements Panel which meets weekly to 'review the care planning arrangements of Looked After Children, to minimise drift and to ensure the most child centred and cost effective use of resources'. [Role of the Placement Panel]. The fostering manager or deputy manager sits on this panel and advises on all current vacancies and any future planned moves. Forms completed for the panel by the social workers include a description of the child's needs 'in order of priority'. The inspector saw evidence from visiting foster carers and from the information from the support groups that trans racial placements would appear to be increasing especially for young children and issues of ethnicity are weighed against the need for a child to be placed locally. The panel does have a robust system of reviewing cases to prevent drift however the inspector saw files where decisions regarding permanency have not been addressed. The implementation of a Permanency team is an important development, which will review the long-term placements of children and provide a sense of security for children and their carers. A clear description of the role of the permanency team is given in the statement of purpose. Three out of the four visits to foster carers were to families with a trans racial placement. In most situations foster carers were provided with additional support to enable a child to develop a positive understanding of his/her heritage. The inspector discussed with the deputy manager of the support team concerns identified in the fourth visit to a foster carer.

The matching of children to foster carers is carried out by a placement panel, which prioritises the needs of children who require accommodation. The fostering service ensures that foster carers receive training and written guidance to enable them to protect children from all forms of abuse. The local authority has written recruitment procedures designed to protect children and promote their welfare. The foster panel monitors the work of the fostering service and is developing a quality assurance role to protect children and carers.

There are management systems in place to monitor allegations of abuse against children and the Corporate Parenting Policy for Enfield includes safeguarding children from bullying and discrimination. The commission has not received regular notification of strategy meetings concerning allegations against foster carers. Minutes of strategy meetings held during this year indicate some confusion over the role of the commission and the information to be shared. A requirement is made to ensure that there is a procedure in place to invite the commission to attend all strategy meetings relating to foster carers and to receive minutes from these meetings. Responses from the children's questionnaires and from visits to children in the foster homes confirmed that children felt safe and were not being bullied. There is a new procedure, which is to be approved for the children missing without authority. The local authority has a clear recruitment and selection procedure for all staff and is in the process of interviewing for social worker posts. The original advertisement to replace the manager of the fostering service did not produce

a suitable candidate and the post will now be re advertised. The inspector expressed concern that the present salary structure is not competitive with neighbouring boroughs and may prevent the recruitment of appropriately experienced and qualified staff. The inspector was advised that senior management is reviewing the salary structure for all staff. The inspector recommends that the review of salaries also include a retention package for staff to maintain stability within the team.

There is now a dedicated team in the fostering service, which deals with the recruitment and initial training of foster carers. The inspector has seen the job description and person specification for staff recruited to the fostering service and these are in order and require applicants to have the appropriate qualifications. There are now social work assistants in the team who work to qualified practice teachers. Recruitment for social work vacancies was being undertaken following the inspection.

The inspector attended the foster care panel and met with the independent chair of the panel and a councillor from the local authority. Applicants wishing to become foster carers are expected to attend the panel. The inspector saw the minutes of the three previous panels. The panel was a lively and informed group of people who welcomed new foster carers and who were very clear about their judgements. The independent chair has regular meetings with the head of service to discuss issues arising from the panel. The fostering service is almost up to date on the annual reviews of their foster carers. The fostering panel and every three years thereafter sees the first annual review of a new foster carer. All other reviews are taken to the fostering sub panel. At present these reviews are carried out within the support team. Whilst the regulations do not require the reviewing officer to be independent of the fostering service the inspector recommends that a new post should be created to provide an independent reviewing officer for foster carers who is based in the quality assurance/monitoring team. This would provide an objective assessment of the foster carer over the previous year and ensure that any practice issues have been properly managed. The independent reviewing officer may also be part of any complaint/investigation into allegations against carers. The deputy manager of the fostering service is adviser to the panel members. The panel provides a quality assurance function and has received training in equality and diversity. The independent chair hopes to produce an annual report in January 2006.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

7,13,

Staff and foster carers have received training in equality and diversity to ensure they understand the needs of all the children requiring a foster placement.

The fostering service provides an environment in which education and learning are valued.

EVIDENCE:

Training is provided to foster carers, social workers and panel members to underline the importance of valuing diversity and promoting equality within the fostering service. Foster carers told the inspector that they often support each other if they care for a child from a different ethnic, religious or cultural background to their own. Two out of the twenty placing officer questionnaires returned indicated that the ethnic backgrounds of the children fostered were not being met in their foster placement.

The inspector interviewed the member of the education team who sits on the foster care panel and who attends the placement panel to ensure that education issues are identified and resolved.

There is a separate team of social workers based in a family centre who assess and support identified foster carers who provide care for children with disabilities. This team was not assessed as part of this inspection.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

10,11

The fostering service provides help and support to carers to enable contact to be maintained with the child's family.

The fostering service is promoting consultation with children by working with leisure resources in the borough.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service assesses and trains foster carers in the importance of maintaining contact with the families of looked after children. The views of foster carers obtained in the questionnaires distributed and in the support group attended was that contact arrangements made by the children's social workers often do not take into account their own family circumstances. Supervising social workers are aware of this but feel they cannot intervene if contact is directed by the Courts. Children's social workers need to ensure that wherever possible they negotiate the contact arrangements with the foster carer and their supervising social worker as part of any placement agreement where these difficulties can be highlighted. If the Courts impose the order, then discussion must take place with the carers and more use of other support systems such as approved volunteers/drivers and local contact centres should be considered.

The response from the children's questionnaires and from interviews with children conducted as part of the inspection confirm that children's views are taken into account and that they are enabled to make a complaint if they are unhappy. Foster carers interviewed at the support group and individually confirmed that they knew how to complain on behalf of the children they were caring for.

The inspector saw a video film made by a group of children in foster care, which enabled the children to express their feelings about being in care.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

14,29

The fostering service has formed positive links with the leaving care team to support young people preparing for adulthood.

EVIDENCE:

There is a written policy on fostering allowances, which is reviewed annually and advised to foster carers. Staff from the Leaving Care team have worked with foster carers to provide a supportive service to young people who are leaving their foster homes to live independently. Advice is available for foster carers regarding the changes in their allowances when a young person transfers to the leaving care team.

The inspector was provided with details of the allowances paid to foster carers for the year 2005/6. The information breaks down the fees paid to short term/long term and kinship carers and explains the tax system on a general level for carers to be able to assess their taxable income. The deputy manager told the inspector that there had not been an increase in the fees this year because there had been a substantial increment for all carers last year.

Management

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

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

The support systems and assessment process in place for carers and staff ensure that young peoples needs are met. The children's files require attention and do not provide an easily accessible and secure record of a child's life. The statement of purpose provides information on the aims and objectives of the service.

The number of agency and independent staff represent almost half the staff complement and this needs to be addressed in recruitment and retention

terms. Children are protected by the fostering service being managed by those with appropriate skills and who are suitable to work with children, with job descriptions and management responsibilities being clearly set out to enable the service to function properly. Management systems in place and new systems currently being developed enable the activities of the fostering service to be monitored and to provide a quality assurance role

Carers are supported through the assessment process and post approval through the review system and regular visits.

New teams have been created and administrative support is appropriate to the task to ensure that an efficient and effective foster care service is provided.

Training needs for carers and staff need to be addressed to ensure that staff and foster carers can develop their skills.

The establishment of a kinship care team is providing support to families and friends who can offer care to a child.

EVIDENCE:

The premises used by the fostering service are adequately equipped for staff to work.

The foster care agreement has been updated to ensure that foster carers can carry out their role effectively. The fostering service has an up to date statement of purpose, which is reviewed regularly. The cover of the document reflects a male white carer and children, which according to the deputy manager is the target group for the fostering service. Other literature for the service reflects the different ethnic groups represented in the borough. The Children's guide is appropriate.

The manager of the fostering team left just before the inspection began and an acting manager has been appointed pending a further re advertisement of the manager's post. The acting manager is suitably qualified and experienced and the team have indicated that they feel very supported by her involvement. The local authority is involved in setting up systems to provide management information for the whole of the service. There is a system for providing foster carers with an annual review of the allowances.

There is a job description and personal specification for the post of manager of the fostering team. There are two deputy managers with clear lines of accountability and an out of hour's service for foster carers.

There is an organisational flow chart in the statement of purpose naming the managers and staff in each of the teams.

Recruitment is taking place for vacancies within the teams. The pre inspection questionnaire indicates that eleven out of twenty three staff in the fostering

service are either independent or agency staff. The manager must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified staff in post to maintain the level of support to foster carers.

There are management systems being developed and in place to support carers and staff. All staff interviewed confirmed that they receive regular supervision and support. Carers confirmed that they receive regular support visits from their supervising social worker.

Supervising social workers and foster carers confirmed that training over the last year has been erratic. First Aid training has been provided and where necessary updated but general training for foster carers has not been properly planned and executed. Foster carers complained that courses were arranged at the last minute and times were not suitable to meet their requirements. The inspector was advised that a new training post has been provided and it is hoped that the training needs for the next year will be addressed. NVQ level 3 training is still progressing with a new group of carers starting this year.

The inspector attended team meetings for the new recruitment and assessment teams and for the support team. Staff confirmed that they feel supported by their manager and deputy managers and made a point of mentioning this to the inspector.

The fostering service has developed and expanded and each team has a clear mandate for the work they have to do.

The new recruitment and assessment team supports carers to the panel stage and provides a handover to the staff in the support team. The success of the recruitment team in achieving their targets means that there are a greater number of cases to be absorbed by the support team. The managers are aware of this but as yet there is no contingency plans in place for this development. The inspector recommends that a review of the staffing needs of the support team should be considered on a six monthly basis.

The fostering service has appointed a foster carer to act as a mentor to new foster carers. Induction training is undertaken by the recruitment and assessment team. There is a programme of training designed for the children of applicants to help them understand the fostering process. New foster carers now provide a 'book' about themselves, which is available for social workers placing children. The inspector recommends that the use of this book could be extended by printing further copies to be given to each child as part of their placement information and may form part of their life story work.

Progress has been made regarding the information provided to foster carers when they accept children into their homes. The inspector saw management checks to ensure that this information is available.

Management information is available on complaints and allegations and records are kept securely. There is a leaflet for foster carers explaining the process if an allegation is made against them.

A move to larger premises is still expected early in 2006.

The fostering service has created a new Kinship care team and recruitment is taking place to staff the team. Work has already begun with kinship carers to provide training and support to carers and their families.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	3
31	X

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

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

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

no

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS9	12 (2)(c)	The fostering service provider must ensure that the Commission is notified when child protection procedures are instigated.	31/01/06
2	FS17	19	The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified staff to maintain the service.	31/03/06
3	FS19	17	The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a suitable programme of training for foster carers	31/03/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FS3	The fostering service provider should consider placing a front sheet with essential information on all agency and independent staff files.

2	FS17	The fostering service provider should consider reviewing the salary and retention policies to ensure that permanent staff will be retained.
3	FS21	The fostering service provider should consider the appointment of an independent reviewing officer for foster carers who would be based in the quality assurance team.
4	FS10	The fostering service provider should consider how intensive contact requirements could be achieved using internal/ external support systems.
5	FS24	The fostering service provider should consider how the foster carer books could be used to provide part of life story work for children.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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