



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough of Hounslow Fostering Service

Fostering Team

Hounslow Social Services

Civic Centre

Lampton Road, Hounslow

Middlesex

TW3 4DN

20th February 2003 25 February 2003 26
February 2003 27 February 2003

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 Hounslow Fostering Service

Address

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Lampton Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW3 4DN

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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 ?

Date of last inspection

Date and Time of Inspection Visit		20/2/03 at 10.00	ID Code
Name of Inspector	1	Lesley Pepler	G10LP1
Name of Inspector	2	Pauline Griffin	G10PG1
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable)		Not used	
Name of Interpreter/Signer (if applicable)		Not used	

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) 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 NCSC in respect of London Borough of Hounslow Fostering Service. 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 NCSC 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

The fostering service of the London Borough of Hounslow is located in Hounslow Civic Centre in an open plan office. The service provides short-term placements, kinship care and respite care. It does not provide respite care for children with special needs. A Team Manager who is accountable to a Service Manager manages the service. The Team Manager is employed by an agency and had been in post for 8 months. There had been no consistent Team Manager for 2.5 years. The Service Manager had been in post for 3 weeks. The Team Manager manages a Training/ Development Officer, the Duty Manager, a Cares' Consultation Officer and a Senior Social Worker. There are 4.5 Support Social Worker posts. At the time of the inspection only 1.5 were filled by permanent staff. There were 2 long-term agency staff and one vacancy. Action was being taken to recruit permanent staff. During the inspection process the Senior Social Worker was appointed to the post of Team Manager. For the purposes of this inspection the Service Manager is regarded as the Manager of the fostering service. The Team Manager will be seen as the Manager at the time of the next inspection. The fostering service had not been adequately managed until the appointments of the Service Manager and Team Manager.

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 Service Manager and Team Manager acknowledged that the fostering service needed to make improvements to meet the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Services Regulations, especially relating to policies and recording. There was clear evidence that work had commenced on this and that improvements had been made in the last year to the operation of the service. The records kept by the carers are inadequate as there is very little information recorded. The Fostering Panel is well managed. The service now has more permanent staff. Carers commented on the previous high turnover of staff. The number of supporting social workers does not appear to be adequate for the number of foster carers and kinship carers in the fostering service. Carers commented on the support they receive from the Carers Consultation Officer. The out of hours service needs to improve. Three of the four carers interviewed were satisfied with the service they receive.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State
(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

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

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

NO

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

YES

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

NO

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

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Under section 47 (5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering services fails to satisfy regulatory requirements, which are not substantial.

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection fully actioned?

N/A

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 National Care Standards Commission 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		

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 and recommendations 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	3(1)	FS1	The Statement of Purpose must fully comply with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	30/9/03
2	3(3)	FS1	The fostering service must produce a children's guide as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	30/9/03
3	3(2)	FS1	A copy of the Statement of Purpose must be sent to the Commission.	1/10/03
4	4(a)(b)	FS1	The fostering service must keep under review and where appropriate revise the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide and notify the National Care Standards Commission of any such revision within 28 days.	30/9/04
5	3(4)	FS1	Copies of the children's guide must be provided to the National Care Standards Commission, to all the carers and (subject to age and understanding) to each child placed.	1/10/03
6	19	FS17	The fostering service must ensure that there are sufficient numbers of supporting social workers to meet the needs of the children and carers.	30/9/03
7	17	FS18	The fostering service must provide adequate outside office hours support to the carers.	31/7/03
8	17	FS18	Carers must receive health and safety	31/10/03

			training, which covers all aspects of risk.	
9	17	FS21	The fostering service must ensure that all policies required by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 are in place.	31/10/03
10	24(5)(c)(iii)	FS30	Efforts must be made to include a member of the Fostering Panel who is, or within the previous two years had been, a foster parent for a fostering service provider other than any of those whose fostering panel is being established.	31/10/03

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	FS1	The Statement of Purpose should be approved by the elected members of the council.
2	FS2	The newly appointed manager should begin management training within six months of appointment and have NVQ Level 4, or equivalent, in management by 2005.
3	FS1	The fostering service should ensure that all carers have a copy of the Foster Carers Handbook.
4	FS10	The carers should record the outcomes of contact arrangements with families and feed this back to the child's social worker.
5	FS11	The fostering service should produce a Complaint's Policy specific to the service in addition to the existing local authority Complaint Procedure. Copies of this should be given to all carers and children.
6	FS21	The fostering service should consider whether following the first review copies of subsequent annual reviews on the carers are submitted to the Fostering Panel.
7	FS22	The Foster Carers Handbook should be reviewed and updated annually.
8	FS25	The fostering service should have a policy on the keeping and retention of case files.

9	FS25	The records of complaints made to the fostering service should include the nature of the complaint, details of the investigation and the outcomes of the investigation.
10	FS30	A quality assurance system should be introduced for monitoring the assessment practices of the Independent Fostering Agencies which presents carers to the Panel for approval.
11	FS9	All relevant information, on children placed by the service, should be given to the carers as soon as possible after the placement commences.
12	FS12	Carers should receive training on health promotion.
13	FS18	The foster Carers' Handbook should include information on the whistle blowing policy.
14	FS19	Long-term agency staff should have appraisals which identifies their training and development needs.
15	FS21	The views and opinions of the carers should be considered when plans are being made for the children placed with them.
16	FS24	Carers should maintain records on children in their care and ensure that carers keep the service informed of any significant events which affect the child. These are to be kept in a secure place.
17	FS32	Kinship Carers should be offered the same training and support as other carers.

* 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	YES
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	NO
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	YES
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	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	NO
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	20/2/03
Time of Inspection	10.00
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	40.25

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC 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.

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?

1

A copy of the Statement of Purpose was given to the Inspectors. This did not comply fully with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards or the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. The Statement of Purpose had not been approved by the elected members of the council. The fostering service had not produced a children's guide to fostering. The Managers of the service were aware of the need to have a children's guide and intend to produce one.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The Service Manager has a social work qualification. He had been in post for three weeks at the time of the inspection. A new Team Manager was appointed during the time of the inspection. He will be recognised as the person managing the service in future. He has a social work qualification but no management qualification. He needs to commence appropriate management training within 6 months of appointment and to have NVQ Level 4 or equivalent by 2005. There was evidence of effective leadership and management provided at the time of the inspection. The inspectors were informed by staff that this has improved during the last few months.</p>		

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Written and verbal references were taken up for new managers of the service. Police checks are to be made every 3 years. The records of three staff were seen. The necessary checks and references were in place.</p>		

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There was evidence of clear roles for managers and staff, and clear lines of communication between managers, staff and carers. There are procedures in place to monitor and review the finances of the service. The fostering service informs carers, managers and staff on the application forms of the need to declare any possible conflicts of interests. The managers were aware of the requirement to make statutory notifications to the National Care Standards Commission, (Regulation 43 (1))

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

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

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

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

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

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

Number of complaints made to NCSC about the agency in the past 12 months:

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)

The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service demonstrated that this standard was met. All the staff, including the managers, informed the Inspectors that they have job descriptions. The levels of delegation, responsibility and accountability are clearly defined. There are clear arrangements in place for cover when the Service Manager or the Team Manager is absent.

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?	
The Inspectors visited four carers, randomly selected and spoke to four children. The homes inspected met the requirements of this Standard. They were homely and safe. The accommodation met the children's assessed needs. Risk assessments had been carried out to identify hazards that could present risks to the children. The homes are inspected at the time of the annual reviews. Only two of the four sets of carers visited had received a brochure or information pack/manual. Therefore they had no written guidance on health and safety issues and responsibilities. The fostering service had ensured that the carers' transport was safe and that it was insured. The carers told the Inspectors that they had been informed of the National Care Standards Commission inspection and the process to be used. There was evidence that the foster children have good experiences of fostering.	2	

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?	
Staff informed the Inspectors that the service gives high priority to valuing diversity and promoting equality. The fostering service aims to match the child and the fostering placement as far as possible. When an emergency placement is made and the matching is not fully satisfactory, a decision is made in consultation with the child's social worker, whether the child should remain with the carer. Joint visits are made to see the child and the carer by the support social worker and the child's social worker to ensure that they all work consistently for the benefit of the child. The Inspectors were informed that the training provided for the carers includes valuing diversity and promoting equality. It is also part of the 6 monthly reviews of all looked after children. The training includes anti discrimination practice. Any child with a disability placed with a carer receives specialist services and support.	3	

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The carers who were interviewed by the Inspectors confirmed that this standard was being met. They receive information from the fostering service, which enables them to decide if they are able to meet the child's needs when it is a planned placement. Carers who replied to the pre inspection questionnaires and carers who were present at the Foster Carers Forum indicated that they only receive emergency placements. The children placed with them do not go through a matching process. A high proportion of placements are emergency placements and the matching process cannot always be followed then.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

Carers are provided with training in caring for children who have been abused and they are informed that there is a Child Protection Policy in the fostering service. Three of the four sets of carers were clear about the policy of the fostering service that corporal punishment should not be used. The carers were able to describe the forms of punishment used. These were withdrawal of favourite pastimes. No form of physical punishment was used. Three carers told the Inspectors that most of the placements they had received were emergencies and that information had been filtered through gradually. One set of carers specifically told the inspectors that not enough information was given them to judge the effect the placement would have on the existing children in the home.

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

97

%

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?**

2

There is information in the Foster Carers' Handbook on contact arrangements between children and their families. The fostering service is informed of the contact arrangements when referrals are received. Social workers make risk assessments on supervised contact with parents when there are no court orders in place relating to parental contact. Attention is paid to providing support regarding contact when the child is placed outside of the area. The views of the children are taken into account when contact is planned. Contact with parents is included in the training given to potential carers. The supporting social workers give help and support to the carers in dealing with any difficult contact issues. The fostering allowance includes transport or other costs the carer may encounter when contact takes place. The Inspectors saw no evidence that the carers record outcomes of contact arrangements to be fed back to the child's social worker.

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 supporting social workers informed the Inspectors that they provide ongoing work with the carers to ensure that they listen to the views of the children placed with them. The supporting social workers talk to the children when they visit the placements. The carers confirmed this. The children are invited to attend the placement agreement meetings, the initial review and the six monthly reviews. One carer gave an example of how she had had to develop means of communicating with one child who had special needs. Some carers had not been informed what to do should they have a complaint about the service..

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?**

2

The carers informed the Inspectors that they do not always receive information on the child's health before a placement is made. This is due to the majority of the placements being emergency placements. They receive information on the child's health soon after the placement has commenced. All the children placed with the carers seen during the inspection were receiving the health care they needed, including regular health checks. There was evidence that training is provided for carers on first aid but not on health promotion. Dealing with infection is covered as part of the health and safety checks made during the selection process for new carers.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)		
The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
It was apparent from discussion with the carers and the staff, and from the operation of the Fostering Panel that a high priority is given to meeting the educational needs of the child or young person. The child or young person continues to attend the same school as he/she did previously if this is possible. Carers attend meetings, open days etc at the schools. There were facilities for the child or young person to do homework in the four homes visited as part of the inspection. They are provided with IT equipment if they need this. The educational attainment of the child or young person is considered at their twice-yearly reviews. The fostering service makes clear its expectations regarding education to the carers when the placements begin. The allowances paid to the carers include any costs incurred relating to education.		

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)		
The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The carers interviewed confirmed that they receive guidance and training on preparing children and young people for adulthood. They also confirmed that they are encouraged to provide opportunities for developing independent living skills. They gave examples of this. The fostering service assists with this work when the young person reaches the age of fifteen.		

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 fostering service has a comprehensive procedure for recruiting staff. There was evidence that recently recruited staff had been interviewed. Both written and verbal references are taken up. The Inspectors were informed that CRB checks are made for new staff. The supporting social workers are asked questions to demonstrate they have appropriate knowledge and skills when they are interviewed. The supporting social workers, both permanent and agency staff, are qualified social workers. All other professional workers involved in the selection process of new carers are appropriately qualified and trained.

Total number of staff of the agency:

14

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

2

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service has clear lines of responsibility and accountability. Carers have annual reviews. The National Minimum Standards outlines that local authorities using agencies check the National Care Standards Commission's reports before doing so. Staff and carers undertake on-going training. There is an effective duty system for dealing with enquiries from prospective carers. Staff informed the Inspectors that there is adequate administrative back up. At the time of the inspection there was an inadequate number of telephones and IT equipment. The Managers informed the Inspectors this will be rectified in the new financial year. All staff have job descriptions, written contracts and conditions of service. Staff who provide supervision to other staff have been trained to do this.

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 managers informed the Inspectors that the supporting social workers should have approximately 12 carers on their caseload. At the time of the inspection the Kinship Carers were unallocated. The managers of the service informed the Inspectors that they would be allocated in the near future. The number of staff will then need to be increased to accommodate this. The service had suffered in the past from insufficient staff. A drive had been successful in 2002 to fill vacancies. Carers made positive comments on the improvements this had made to the support they receive. The fostering service has a recruitment strategy for new carers, which is reviewed annually. The service uses the BAAF assessment process for selecting carers. The service employs a Carers' Consultation Officer who works with carers when they have difficulties with the children's behaviour.		

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?	2
The Inspectors saw evidence of sound employment practices in relation to both staff and carers. Two of the four carers had used the out of hours service and had found it unsatisfactory due to delays in response time and staff having no expertise in foster caring. Carers receive regular formal supervision. Plans are in hand to extend this to Kinship Carers. The Health and Safety Policy does not include all aspects of risk. There is no formalised guidance or training on blood born infections. The fostering service is covered by the local authority's insurance indemnity. There is a whistle blowing policy but it is not included in the Foster Carers' Handbook.		

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?	2
There is a training plan for staff and carers, including induction training for new staff. Only permanent staff have appraisals. Carers' training needs are identified in their regular meetings with the supporting social workers and at their annual reviews. All the staff had been given a copy of the National Minimum Standards. Joint training is arranged for staff and carers.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The Inspectors found that all the staff interviewed had clear written details and knowledge of their duties and responsibilities. The Inspectors found the written records of supervision notes and assessments were satisfactory. The Inspectors noted that regular staff and monthly team meetings are held.		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6) The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
A Handbook on the Fostering Service is available for the staff. This did not fully comply with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards, as it does not include all the policies required to be in place. The Managers of the fostering service were planning to review the Handbook. There is a comprehensive Foster Carers' Handbook. Two of the four carers interviewed had not been given a copy of this. The Inspectors were informed by the managers of the service that this Handbook will be reviewed and brought up to date in the near future. It was evident that both the carers and the supporting social workers have a clear understanding of the role the supporting social worker. Some carers do not feel that they are consulted or included as much as they should be or given all information they need. The carers have annual reviews but only their first one is presented to the Fostering Panel.		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10) The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
Carers interviewed informed the inspectors that they receive adequate support now from the supervising social workers. This had not always occurred in the past. Carers do not always receive adequate support or information from the children's social workers. Supervising social workers visit the carers at a minimum of every 6 weeks. Both announced and unannounced visits are made. Foster Carers Forums are held occasionally. The fostering service intends these to be held 4 times a year in future. There are systems in place to provide practical support to carers The carers informed the Inspectors that they knew how to complain but they had not been given written information on complaints. The inspectors were informed that the local authority 's Complaint Policy is used.		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The fostering service employs a Training Development/Recruitment Officer. She informed the Inspectors that training now has a higher profile in the fostering service than in the past. Pre- approval training and induction training is provided for potential carers. Equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice are reflected in the training. Carers confirmed that they receive training. There is a stipulation that both carers attend training when both are registered. Post approval training is provided on a monthly basis. Some is mandatory. There is an expectation that carers attend 8 sessions in a 2-year period. Supporting social workers attend some training with the carers. Carers' training needs are identified at their annual reviews. Group meetings are held for the carers' children. Carers are encouraged to do NVQ Level 3 training, paid for by the service. Some are currently doing this.

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

The Team Manager informed the Inspectors that she has recommended that the supporting social workers should receive training on recording to improve the standard of recording. The fostering service provides written information for the carers on the children's legal position and the reason for the placement. The records, held at the service, of 5 looked after children were examined. They held the necessary information. The records kept by four carers were also examined. They were unsatisfactory, as they did not contain any records made by the carers. They were not well maintained or in chronological order. The records were not stored in a secure place in one home. Carers receive training on assisting looked after children to produce a Memory Book.

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?

2

Separate records are kept for all parts of the service. An audit system is in place for monitoring the records. They are stored securely at all times. The records of the looked after children are in a form that can be easily transferred to other placements. There is no written policy relating to records. There are adequate systems for recording except for the records made of complaints. These do not record adequate information on the nature of the complaint, details of the investigation and the outcome of the investigation.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

52

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

47

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

18

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

5

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

5

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

241.39

Maximum £

302.89

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 Service Manager's office is in a different building to the other staff in the fostering service. The buildings are only a few minutes walk apart. The Manager's office is small but adequate. The other staff are located in Hounslow Civic Centre. This is an open plan office. Staff informed the Inspectors that they do not have an adequate supply of IT equipment or telephones. The managers were well aware of this and informed the Inspectors that action was planned to address the shortfall. There are secure systems in place for storing records. The premises are suitable for the fostering service.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

9

This Standard is not applicable to a National Care Standards Commission inspection of a local authority fostering service.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The finances of the fostering services operates within the local authority's budgetary system. The service receives an annual budget and the Service Manager monitors this through a monthly printout detailing cost centre expenditure. The local authority's registered auditors maintain the accounts of the service.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

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

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

There is a written policy on fostering allowances. The scales of charges are dependent on the age and any special circumstances/requirements of the child. The amount paid takes into account special expenses over the year such as birthdays and Christmas. The Inspectors were informed by the Service Manager and the Team Manager that the carers will be given a break down of the allowances to indicate amounts for presents and other expenditure. Carers informed the Inspectors that they receive their weekly allowances promptly.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There are written procedures for the Fostering Panel Members. The members have undergone CRB checks. One member of the Panel has paediatric expertise. There is no formal quality assurance system for monitoring the assessment process and to ensure consistency of approach from the Independent Fostering Agencies which provide information to the Panel. The Panel is informed of all the carer reviews' first annual reviews. The carers are reviewed by the Panel every three years. They are not informed of the outcomes of subsequent reviews. The Panel included independent representatives but there was no member who had experience of being fostered or of the fostering process. The inspectors observed a Panel Meeting. It was conducted in a very professional manner. The Chair of the Panel is employed by the local authority but has no responsibility for the fostering service.

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?

3

The fostering service has five carers who provide respite care. An Independent Fostering Agency provides respite care for children with special needs. The carers who provide respite care undergo the same selection and training procedures as the other carers. Birth parents remain in control of the health and educational needs of the children placed with respite carers.

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?

1

At the time of the inspection there were nine approved kinship carers and five people were in the process of being approved. Currently the kinship carers do not receive training and a supporting social worker is not allocated to them. They do not have annual reviews. There are plans to address this in the future. The Inspectors visited one kinship carer and met the young person placed there. The placement had been an emergency one and the vetting process had started after the placement commenced. In this instance the carer had not known the young person previously. The young person had been a friend of the carer's granddaughter. The carer was aware that support is available if she needs it. She had not been given a Foster Carer's Handbook. It was very apparent that it was a successful kinship placement.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

Lead Inspector _____ **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.**

An Action Plan has been received from the provider and agreed by the NCSC.

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

A copy of the provider's comments are available at the Area office.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the provider

YES

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

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

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

Action plan was received at the point of publication

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

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

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

It should be noted that all NCSC inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to NCSC 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 Neil Harris of Hounslow Social Services Department 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	<u>Neil Harris</u>
Signature	<u>Neil Harris (signed)</u>
Designation	<u>Service Manager</u>
Date	<u>27/05/2003</u>

Or

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

--	--

Print Name	_____
Signature	_____
Designation	_____
Date	_____

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