

inspection report

Fostering Services

London Borough of Havering Fostering Service

Midland House
109-113 Victoria Road
Romford
Essex
RM1 2LX

2nd February 2005, 7th March 2005, 9th
March 2005, 10th March 2005, 15th March
2005, Wednesday 16th 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 Havering Fostering Service

Address

Midland House, 109-113 Victoria Road, Romford, Essex,
RM1 2LX

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uk

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

NO

Name of Agency

Tel No

Address

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

Name of Registered Provider

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Date of first registration

Date of latest registration certificate

Registration Conditions Apply ?

Date of last inspection

Date of Inspection Visit		2.2.05, 7.3.05, 9.3.05, 10.3.05, 15.3.05, 16.3.05		ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		9.30 am		
Name of Inspector	1	Angela Hunt	081539	
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		Linda McGrath		

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 4. Securing and promoting welfare**
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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 Havering 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 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.
<p>The London Borough of Havering is a Local Authority Fostering Service. It is located at Midland House, Victoria Road, Romford, Essex. Fostering services provided include short term, long term, shared care (Family Link) and kinship fostering for children 0-18 years who are looked after by the local authority. Where the needs of young people and children cannot be met from within the Authority's fostering service, provision is commissioned from independent providers.</p>

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.)

This inspection was undertaken over a period of 6 days. This was to enable the Inspector to observe a fostering panel meeting, visit 5 foster families, consult with children/young people, attend foster carers coffee meeting and a shared care (family link) foster carers evening meeting, meet with managers and the fostering service team, examine files and records and inspect policy/practice documents.

Since the previous inspection conducted in February and March 2004, there are now key National Minimum Standards which must be assessed during each inspection year for Fostering Services. In addition to these, there are a number of supplementary standards which were also assessed during this inspection. These were based on the requirements identified during the previous inspection combined with any indicators of risk.

Overall, this was a positive inspection. Strengths identified include the following;

- A sense of commitment within the fostering services staff team and evidence of effective team working
- Effective leadership of the staff and service operation
- Positive comments from foster carers about the level of support and training they receive from the fostering team
- Young people spoken with confirmed they were encouraged to maintain contact with family members and friendships, where appropriate
- Young people spoken with felt at ease to approach their foster carer or Social Worker, should they have a concern or complaint
- Consultation forms for young people are in place
- An established programme of ongoing meetings and social forums for foster carers, including shared carers is in operation
- The male carers group has recently been re-launched
- Files are well organised files and there is evidence in support of them being subject to internal auditing
- Foster carers spoken with confirmed that the administration of their payments is good

Areas identified that require further development include the following:

- To develop or in some cases further develop a number of service specific core policies - i.e. relating to a child being absent from the foster carers home without permission, bullying, a clear indication as to when physical intervention to restrain a child should be used (already included in Family Link handbook but not in full time foster carers handbook) and to extend the guidance on prohibited forms of sanctions to include that corporal punishment is not acceptable (already included in Family Link

handbook but not in full time foster carers handbook)

- To complete the Children's Guide currently in draft form
- To review the contents of the foster carers handbook
- To review the written information on the function of the fostering panel in order to ensure that it provides an accurate reflection of the decision-making processes in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.
- To further extend the information available to the fostering panel to include the type of carers available to the authority, in comparison with the needs of children.
- To progress the work currently being undertaken in relation to out of hours support arrangements for foster carers.
- To progress the findings of the feasibility study currently being undertaken in relation to the level of support Kinship carers require from the fostering service
- To examine how the findings of the young peoples consultation forms recently distributed will be evaluated and acted upon, where appropriate.

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:

As at the time of writing this report, it should be noted that Section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000 has been repealed. Notwithstanding this, the report highlights some areas of the service that do not meet the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Whilst these are not deemed as substantial concerns, these are listed as requirements in this report. CSCI (Commission for Social Care Inspection) will monitor the progress of these.

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		

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	13(3)	FS9	To prepare and implement a written procedure to be followed if a child is absent from a foster carer's home without permission	31/07/05
2	12(2)	FS9	That the written information on the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect, be extended to include reference to the arrangements in place for persons working for the purpose of a fostering service, foster carers and children placed by the fostering service, to contact the Commission regarding any concern about child welfare or safety, as specified in Regulation 12(2)(f)(ii) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.	31/07/05
3	13(1) 13(2)	FS9	That the issue whereby corporal punishment is not acceptable is included in the full time carers' handbook. The guidance to foster carers on permitted and prohibited forms of sanctions must be extended to include the aspect of restraint in accordance with regulation 13(1) and 13(2)(c) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2001.	31/07/05
4	35	FS16FS16	That local authority ensures that further work is undertaken to develop a system to ensure that the quality of care to be provided by an independent fostering agency is clearly specified in the contract and appropriate monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure compliance.	30/06/05

5	28(5)(b)	FS32FS32 FS21FS21	Upon completion of the feasibility study currently being undertaken by 'Fostering Options', the Fostering Service provider must give consideration to the findings of the study. Work must be undertaken to develop a clear strategy for working with and supporting Kinship Carers. Detail of the amount of support and training to be given to Kinship Carers must be included in a written foster care agreement.	31/07/05
6	26 28 29	FS30FS30	All panel members need to be clear as to the decision making processes, in particular that while the fostering panel may make a recommendation, no member of its panel shall take part in any decision made by a fostering service provider under paragraph (3) of Regulation 28. Written information on the functions and role of the fostering panel must be reviewed within the context of compliance with Regulations 26, 28 and 29 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002	30/06/05

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	FS9	The foster carers handbook should be reviewed and updated so as to ensure that the information contained is accurate and current and reflects both current practice and legislation
2		It is strongly recommended that the information within the Foster Carers Handbook should be extended to include the aspect of bullying and the procedures in place to recognise, record and address any instances of bullying and of the help in place for foster carers to cope with it.
3	FS11	The service should review the consultation forms which have recently been distributed to all looked after children, within the context of ensuring that the format of future forms make it is clear as to the type of provision the young person is being provided with. This is in order that any necessary follow up action arising from such surveys can be effectively acted upon with the relevant service provision.

4	FS17	Continued efforts should be made to try and secure additional resources within the fostering service team, in particular given the expansion of the Family Link scheme.
5	FS18	It is strongly recommended that the proposal to include foster carers in providing out of hours advice and support to other carers be reviewed.
6	FS30FS30	That for monitoring purposes consideration is given to providing the fostering panel with details of the range and type of carers available to the authority, in comparison with the needs of children/young people

* 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	10
Survey of placing authorities	NO
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	NO
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	YES
Date of Inspection	02/02/05
Time of Inspection	09.30

Duration Of Inspection (hrs)

45.0

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?

3

There is a Statement of Purpose in place which outlines the services provided by the provider. This includes three key areas of activity, namely fostering, shared carer scheme (called Family Link) and adoption. The fostering service provider's Statement of Purpose was recently reviewed in October 2004 and sets out the aims and objectives of the Fostering Services and Family Link Scheme. It includes details of the Services team structure, the numbers of staff, the numbers of foster carers, the numbers of children placed, the number of complaints and their outcomes and details of the recruitment, approval, training and support available for foster carers.

The Children's Guide currently in use is titled 'Away from Home'. Within this leaflet, it outlines whom a young person may approach if they are not happy with the plans for them. It also highlights that should a young person have a complaint they can obtain a leaflet either from their Social Worker or a Children's Rights Officer. In addition to the Children's Guide leaflet there is a Children's Statement of Purpose Summary which contains details of the Authority's Customer Relations Officers and other useful contact numbers including the Children's Right Officer and the CSCI (Commission for Social Care Inspection).

Service specific Children's Guides are being developed and were at the time of this inspection in draft form. There are two draft guides, one specific to the short break and family link scheme and a second specific to long term fostering. While during the course of the inspection, the Inspector made minor comments on these documents relating to the contents as outlined in Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, it was positive to see the work which has been undertaken in this area.

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
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The pre-inspection questionnaire indicates that the Manager possesses the relevant qualifications and experience in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Manager has been the team manager of the Family Placement Service for the last 6 years and has worked with children and families since 1989. The Manager is clearly well respected amongst the staff team, with staff confirming that they are provided with a good level of support from the Manager in their work with foster families and young people.

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
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The Fostering Service Manager and Service Manager have responsibility for recruiting staff. The Fostering Service Manager reported there are currently no vacancies within either the fostering service or family link scheme.

Of the two personnel files examined by the Service Inspectors as part of their inspection of the London Borough of Havering's Children's Services, it was reported that they contained the relevant matters listed in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

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

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

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

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Fostering Service Manager reported that currently she has day-to-day responsibility for the fostering, adoption and home from home teams. The Fostering Services Manager is in turn accountable and reports to the Resource Service Manager. Within the fostering team, there is a Senior Practitioner and an Advanced Practitioner. The Senior Practitioner has supervisory responsibility for staff and manages part of the fostering team. In addition, the Senior Practitioner deputises in the absence of the Fostering Services Manager. The Fostering Service Manager supervises the other part of the fostering team including the 3 family link co-ordinators. The Advanced Practitioner has responsibility for leading and developing practice. The fostering service team confirmed that they welcomed this development and viewed it as a positive change. The Fostering Service Manager reported that all posts have separate job descriptions, which clearly define their specific roles and responsibilities.

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

0

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.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

2

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?	0
This standard was not assessed on this occasion.		

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

During the course of the inspection, the Inspector visited 5 foster families in their own homes. Of those homes visited, each foster child has their own bed and accommodation arrangements reflecting their need for privacy and space. At the time of visiting the foster families there were no evident signs of any environmental hazards that might expose a foster child/young person to risk of injury or harm.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There are currently three ethnic minority foster families, one of whom does not have any children currently placed with them. Upon talking with foster carers, one spoke of providing young people an opportunity to attend such religious services as are appropriate to the religious persuasion to which the child may belong. This foster carer demonstrated a clear understanding as to the value of ensuring that important aspects of a child's cultural and religious heritage are not lost at this crucial stage of his/her life.

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**

Written information in place indicates that placements for children are considered on the basis of first seeking carers from within the child's own family (Kinship Carers). If this is not possible placements from within the boroughs own resources (i.e. foster carers/shared carers) will be sought where appropriate. If this is then not available the Children's Commissioning Unit will locate an external resource. While an effort is made to place children with a family of similar ethnic origin and religion where appropriate, this is unfortunately not always possible as the services currently has only three foster carers from ethnic minority groups.

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**

Comments received from foster carers confirmed that training on Child Protection is on offer to them. However, some made reference to the poor timetabling of the 6-day Child Protection course that was shortly due to take place, as the final two days of the course fell within the Easter School Holidays when foster children would be off School during the daytime. In addition, Link Scheme foster carers also expressed that the training opportunities afforded to them were often more relevant to Havering's other foster carers rather than specific to their own particular roles as foster carers. The written information (i.e. Foster Carers Handbook) provided to foster carers includes information on the aspects of child protection and discipline.

The various sources of information on Child Protection in the Foster Carers Handbook outlines the various forms of abuse, possible indicators of abuse, and whom to report any suspicions of. abuse or neglect to. Within the written information on the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect, there is no reference made to the arrangements in place for persons working for the purpose of a fostering service, foster carers and children placed by the fostering service, to contact the Commission regarding any concern about child welfare or safety, as specified in Regulation 12(2)(f)(ii) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Guidance is available to foster carers on permitted and prohibited forms of sanctions when there are instances of behaviour which would in any family or group environment reasonably be regarded as unacceptable. While the information in the link carers' handbook makes clear that corporal punishment is not acceptable, this issue is not highlighted in the full time carers handbook. The guidance to foster carers on permitted and prohibited forms of sanctions does not make mention to the aspect of restraint in accordance with regulation 13(1) and 13(2)(c) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2001. While information contained within the Foster Carers Handbook outlines that when first approved as a foster carer they will have signed an undertaking which included a commitment not to use physical punishment, there was no evidence of this process having taken place in the 5 foster carers files examined.

There is no information within the Foster Carers Handbook on bullying or of the procedures in place to recognise, record and address any instances of bullying and of the help in place for foster carers to cope with it.

A number of articles and inserts contained within the foster carers handbook from various publications are dated 1999 or in some cases are dated earlier than this. These are in need of review and updating so as to ensure that they reflect both current practice and legislation. For example, regular reference is made throughout the Foster Carers Handbook to the UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999 and the Foster Placement (Children) Regulations 1991. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services issued by the Department of Health and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 form the basis of the current regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering services, which includes Local Authority fostering services. It should be noted that these regulations and standards replace The Fostering Placement (Children) Regulations 1991.

While the Authority has guidance for Children and Families staff regarding processes to be followed when a child, adult or family are missing, this is not specific to the procedure to be followed if a child is absent from a foster families home without permission. Furthermore, there is no reference in the foster carers handbook to the unauthorised absence of a young person or of the course of action foster carers are expected to take should this occur.

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

X

%

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?

0

While this standard was not assessed on this occasion, the young people and foster carers spoken to confirmed that young people in foster carers are encouraged to maintain contact with family members and friendships, unless it is not reasonably practicable or consistent with the child's welfare to do so.

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**

While this standard was not fully assessed of this occasion, children are provided with information on how to raise a concern or complaint. Those children/young people spoken to during the course of the inspection confirmed that they felt at ease to either approach their foster carer or their Social Worker should they have a concern or complaint to make. A procedure is in place outlining the process for dealing with a complaint and concern against foster carers including shared carers and kinship carers. It outlines that the carers' panel will be made aware of all serious complaints and concerns about carers and that the carers next review will be taken to panel and panel will make a decision as to the re-approval and/or an action plan.

Family Link young persons consultation semi pictorial form is in place seeking the views of their carer. While consultation forms had been sent out to all of the looked after children, they do not include a space/section by which to determine the type of provision. This would inevitably make it difficult to follow up on any action identified as a result of the outcome of such a survey, with the relevant service provision.

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**

While the main Foster Carers handbook contains details on Health and Safety, this is dated March 1995 and is information published by the Foster Carers Association, and does not relate specifically to the processes and procedures in place within the Fostering Service. For example, the information on first aid and medication outlines that fostering households should have a basic first aid kit and that in order for a carer to accept responsibility to undertake responsibility to undertake procedures such as injections, administering rectal Diazepam the carer is instructed in the technique by a qualified nurse or doctor who is satisfied that the carer is competent to undertake the specific procedure. The information contained within the Family Link Carers handbook is more concise and contains up to date information on basic health issues and first aid.

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?**

0

This standard was not assessed on this occasion.

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?**

0

This standard was not assessed on this occasion.

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

There are clear written recruitment and selection procedures in place for appointing staff. This includes an interview as part of the selection process. Of the two staff files examined by the Service Inspectors as part of the Children's Service Inspection, it was confirmed that there was evidence in support of the relevant checks and references having been carried out as specified in Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.t

Total number of staff of the agency:

13

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

1

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?

2

There is an appropriate management structure in place with clear lines of accountability. Staff spoken with confirmed that they are appropriately managed and supported in undertaking their role and responsibilities. There are clear systems in place to determine, prioritise and monitor workloads and assign tasks to appropriate staff. Structures and systems exist to ensure assessments; approvals and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively. Due to the commitment of the team who often work in excess of their contractual hours, the work required is delivered in an efficient and effective manner. Staffs' commitment to their work with carers is to be commended.

In addition to the fostering services own carers they also make use of independent fostering agencies to meet the needs of children/young people needing such care provision. Upon speaking with the Commissioning department, it is not automatic practice to check the Commissions inspection reports before using such changes. From discussions with the Commissioning department and senior management, it is evident that further work is needed in making sure there is a system in place to ensure that the quality of care to be provided by an independent fostering agency is clearly specified in the contract and appropriate monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure compliance. While there is a draft commissioning strategy in place, which is awaiting approval, managers were accepting that

this was an area, which required further development.

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 Family Placement Service establishment consists of a Team Manager, 2 Senior Practitioners covering fostering and adoption, 11 FTE Social Workers (3 in adoption, 2 in Home from Home and 6 in fostering) and 3 FTE administrators. There is currently no permanent administrator within the fostering team. The Team is managed within the Children & Families section of Social Services by the Service Manager, Resources. The named manager for the family Placement Service is Linda McGrath. During discussions with staff, the Inspector sensed that the Social Workers within the fostering team are stretched and often do over and above their contractual hours of work in order to get the various parts of their job done (i.e. assessments, training, reviews, supporting carers etc). As the Family Link scheme is expanding, consideration will inevitably need to be given to increasing staffing levels within this area of the fostering service. Staff spoken with confirmed that there was an acknowledgement with the management team of this and of a commitment to try and secure additional resources within the fostering service team.

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

There are clear employment practices in relation to both staff and carers. The current out of hours management and support arrangements available for foster carers is via Barking and Dagenham EDT (Emergency Duty Team). In attempting to enhance the support arrangements available, the Fostering Service was looking at the option of experienced foster carers offering telephone support to other foster carers on a paid rota basis. The principle being that such carers would be the first point of call and then to forward on to the team if the matter needed it. EDT would still remain as a point of contact. Upon speaking with foster carers and staff concerning this proposal, concerns were expressed as to whether this level of responsibility was appropriate to delegate to experienced foster carers. The Inspector shared such concerns, in particular as to the appropriateness of this proposal within the context of the Local Authority's duty of care to children placed in foster families settings. While this proposal had at the time of the inspection not been implemented, it is strongly recommended that the proposal to include foster carers in providing out of hours advice and support to other carers be reviewed.

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**

Staff spoken with commented positively about the training opportunities available. Each member of staff receives a 6 monthly appraisal, which identifies the training and development needs of staff involved in fostering work. Staff commented that they work well as a team and that those staff with management responsibility are committed to supervision and the development of staff. From discussion with staff it is evident that the Fostering Service Team consists of a group of highly skilled and experienced individuals who work well together with one another.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)

All staff are properly accountable and supported.

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

Staff spoken with indicated that they are clear as to their specific duties and responsibilities. There is a clear system in place in which staff receive regular and ongoing management supervision and support. In addition to one to one sessions, there are regular team meetings and away days convened. Staff were complimentary about the leadership and support provided to them by the Fostering Team Manager.

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**

Regular coffee mornings and a number of forums for carers to meet, as peers and with staff and managers are convened. Regular support groups are held for foster carers and shared carers, which target the specific needs of children and young people they care for. Foster Carers and Shared Carers are supported through the allocation of a 'Supervising Social Worker' who visits regularly. Currently, the same arrangement is not in place in relation to Kinship Carers. Kinship carers are currently supervised and supported by the child's social worker and not by fostering services staff. The Fostering Services Manager reported that 'Fostering Options' are currently conducting a feasibility study on behalf of the London Borough of Havering Fostering Service, in order to identify the level of support Kinship carers require. The Fostering Service Manager reported that a large number of the Kinship carers live outside of the borough, making regular visiting contact more difficult in comparison to those who reside within the borough. A strategy for working with and supporting Kinship Carers is an area requiring further work/development. From speaking with the staff team, they indicated that there is generally a good system of communication between themselves and the child's social worker fostering service.

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**

While the foster carers files examined contained evidence in support of foster care agreements being in place, these were not examined in detail on this occasion. Each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, social worker from the Fostering Service team. Foster carers spoken with during the course of the inspection confirmed that they have access to adequate social work support, information and advice to enable them to care for children placed with them. While foster carers confirmed that they are provided with a handbook covering the policies, procedures, guidance and legal information, the handbook for full time foster carers requires reviewing in order to ensure that it meets best practice and reference to current legislation. This aspect has been highlighted as an area needing action earlier in this report under National Minimum Standard 9. The handbook in place for Family Link Carers is more succinct and upon examination does not require the same updating, as per the main handbook in place.

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**

While the Statement of Purpose outlines that Kinship carers will have the same access to support, as other carers by January 2005, they currently continue to be supervised and supported by the child's social worker and not by fostering services staff. The Fostering Services Manager reported that 'Fostering Options' are currently conducting a feasibility study on behalf of the London Borough of Havering Fostering Service, in order to identify the level of support Kinship carers require. The Fostering Service Manager reported that a large number of the Kinship carers live outside of the borough, making regular visiting contact more difficult in comparison to those who reside within the borough. Generally, foster carers spoken with both during visits to their homes and during meetings commented positively about the training opportunities and support offered to them. Family Link Carers did however positive that the opportunity for NVQ training was offered to full time carers in the first instance and indicated that priority was given to that group of carers rather than themselves. The Fostering Service Manager and Family Link workers were accepting of this feedback. The Fostering Service Manager made comment to the fact that many of those carers who were part of the Family Link Scheme worked full time and therefore there were practicality issues around facilitating such training for them. Notwithstanding this, the Fostering Service Manager made comment to there being a commitment to all carers who had expressed an interest in undertaking an NVQ qualification to do so.

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?

3

Records examined were well organised and maintained in a methodical manner. Of the case files sampled there was an up to date and comprehensive case record detailing the nature of care provided and significant life events. Foster carers visited indicated knowledge of why the young person is in foster care and the basis for the current placement with them. While foster carers expressed frustration at instances whereby the child's own social worker had changed regularly, they expressed satisfaction as to the contact and information they received from their allocated social worker from the Fostering Service Team.

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?

0

This standard was not assessed on this occasion.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

X

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

X

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

X

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

X

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

X

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

209

Maximum £

294

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 Fostering Service Team is based at Midland House along with the Leaving Care Team and the Adoption Team. While there are identifiable office premises to which staff and others with a legitimate interest have access during normal office hours, the Fostering Services action plan identifies the need to look for larger accommodation. The current premises while limited in the availability of space and car parking, have facilities for the secure retention of records and provide an equipped base from which staff work.

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?

0

This standard was not assessed on this occasion.

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?

0

This standard was not assessed on this occasion.

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 fostering rate paid for children and young people placed with foster carers in task centred and long term placements ranges from £209 to £294 per week deepening on the age of the child/young person. These allowances are paid on a fortnightly basis.

The current family link (shared care) allowances is £4.08 per hour for up to a maximum of 12 hours per day, £11.78 for an overnight stay, £60.74 for a 12 hour day plus overnight stay (max payable for 24 hour period), £425.18 for a one week stay (7 days) and a £12 Christmas Grant (provided to the main carer for the child) The allowance is paid on a fortnightly basis on receipt of the required claim form. The Link Co-ordinators reported that the rate for family link carers is currently under review. Kinship allowances range from £92.60 to £167.45 per week dependent on the age of the child/young person. In addition, there is a birthday grant paid the month prior to the child's birthday, a holiday grant, and a Christmas or Religious Festival Grant. Again, these allowances are paid on a fortnightly basis.

Foster Carers spoken with confirmed that they receive prompt payment of any allowances and agreed expenses due to them.

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

The written information presented to the Inspector as part of the pre-inspection information did not always make clear the correct decision making processes in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. For example, the written policies/procedures in place in respect of the function of the fostering panel made mention on several occasions to the panels' role to approve carers rather than making recommendations to the fostering service provider. For example, the written carers fostering panel appeals procedure for prospective foster carers, shared carers and kinship carers outlines that prospective carers have 14 days from the date of the written notification of the Carers' Panel *decision* in which to give notice of their intention to appeal the *decision*. In the event that an appeal is lodged, the process in place outlines that an 'Appeals Panel' will be set up consisting of 3 senior members of the Directorate and should include a member of the Quality Assurance Unit.

During the observation of the fostering panel, on several occasions the Inspector witnessed the Chair making reference to the panel's decision to approve, rather than the panel's function to make recommendations to the fostering service provider in accordance with Regulation 26 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. Regulation 28(4) of the Fostering Services Regulations makes clear that no member of its fostering panel shall take part in any decision made by a fostering service provider in deciding whether to approve a person as a foster carer.

Prospective and approved foster carers/shared carers were invited to attend the fostering panel meeting when their application/review is being considered. It was positive to note the evaluation forms in place to monitor applicants' experience of the panel.

The Fostering Service Manager confirmed that all panel members have had a satisfactory Criminal Record Bureau check completed. The panel composition is in accordance with Regulation 24 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. There is an independent Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel, both of who are not employees of the London Borough of Havering. It was also positive to note that one of the Panel's independent members is a person who was previously themselves placed with foster carers.

While the Panel Chair reported that business meetings are convened twice annually where the Department provides details of the numbers awaiting placements, there was no evidence in support of the panel being provided with information on the needs of children in the local area, thus being able to monitor the range and type of carers available to the authority in comparison with the needs of children/young people

Assessing social workers prepare assessments using BAAF Form F. First and every

subsequent third review conducted by carers panel. Interim reviews by team manager and approved by the Service Manager

Upon examining foster carer file the Inspector noted some instances whereby placements had been made outside of the foster carers terms of approval. Upon enquiring, the Fostering Manager reported that in exceptional circumstances exemptions to a foster carers terms of approval are made. The Service Manager or Head of Service, Children's Services make these. The procedure in place outlines that the panels views must be sought within 28 days of the exception being made or at the next available Panel meeting

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?
---------------------------	---------------

The service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, where parents remain central to the promotion of health and education needs. This part of the service is the Family Link Scheme. Separate policies and procedures are in place for foster carers, which are specific to the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.	3
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Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

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

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

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

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
Kinship carers are currently not provided with the same support and training as for other carers. While assessment of Kinship carers are presented to the Fostering Panel, due to the lack of available resources Kinship carers are currently supervised and supported by the child's social worker and not by fostering services staff. The Fostering Service Manager reported that a feasibility study is currently being conducted, in order to identify the level of support Kinship carers require.	2

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 between 2nd February 2005 and 16th 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

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

NO

Note:

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

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

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

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

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

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

Public reports

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

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

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

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

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

Or

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

--

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation _____

Date _____

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

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